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The No Child Left Behind Act: The Divide Between Policy and Practice

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The No Child Left Behind Act: The Divide Between Policy and Practice

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Max and all of the encouragement he has given me while I have worked on this project. Thanks for hanging in there with me.

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The No Child Left Behind Act: The Divide Between Policy and Practice

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This research explores the divide in communication between policy makers and educators with respect to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). A brief overview of the current political climate surrounding education of offered to provide some context for the policy. Historical perspectives on the enterprise of education, including those of Mann, Dewey, Ravitch and Callahan, are discussed to expose the roots of NCLB. Theoretical perspectives from Ellul, Foucault, Habermas and Gadamer are provided as lens through which the actions of policy makers and educators might be considered. Transcripts from the House Committee Hearings leading up to the creation of NCLB were analyzed in order to gain some understanding of policy maker intentions for the law. The transcripts were also studied to determine who is providing input to politicians during the law making process. The text of the policy was then analyzed to further understand the legal intent behind education law. Educators including, three elementary campus-level administrators and six teachers, were interviewed to determine educator perceptions about the effects of NCLB on practice and perceived differences about the purposes of education between educators and lawmakers. Based on the analysis of congressional

hearings, politicians gave little evidence of deeper understanding of the purposes of education compared with the understandings gathered from educator interviews. Gaps in dialogue opportunities were evident with politicians typically interacting with hearing contributors representing business people and heads of school districts rather than campus educators. Educators in turn tended to talk with other educators whom they felt understood them. Most of those educators interviewed expressed little interest in working to educate policy makers about the needs of schools. Educator understanding of NCLB was limited to knowledge related to discreet compliance information.

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Introduction

With the end of 2006 fast approaching, an important date in education law is on the horizon. In 2007, the No Child Left behind Act, one of the most far-reaching pieces of education legislation in American history will be up for reauthorization. That reauthorization is on the offing makes an examination of the policy from practitioner and policy maker perspectives timely. The current administration has continued to hold that the implementation of NCLB as an unqualified success. In a discussion with education leaders and policy makers held on October 5, 2006, President George W. Bush (The White House Press Office, 2006) described what he sees as successes under the law. According to the President, the law is working because it is straightforward and allows schools to achieve academic goals through local control. The cultures of schools are changing to recognize the needs of all students, especially those children who do not speak English at home. Bush cites increases on student scores on 3rd grade math and reading tests, and it clear that such gains are proof that NCLB is working. Because of these gains, the President argues that it would be a mistake to turn from the plan NCLB has set in place for American education. Originally conceived to support underachieving learners in elementary schools, it is likely that consideration for expanding the law to secondary schools will be a part of the agenda, an idea that Bush presented during the discussion. In order to strengthen the impact of the law, he also promised to work towards improving teacher quality through providing incentive pay for teachers whose students perform well on tests or who choose to work in the neediest schools. Additionally, he called for more supports for parents in terms of creating new transfer choices away from poor schools. That President Bush, who has been the driving force

behind NCLB is touting its successes is understandable. But in taking a deeper look at education after five years under the law, it becomes important to ask if NCLB is fulfilling all it has promised to fulfill? Are policy makers and legislators on the same page with the creation and implementation of the law?

When I began this exploration of No Child Left Behind a few years ago, people would often ask me why I wanted to take on such a daunting task. With the text of the law itself covering close to 800 pages, I could see their point but my own experiences in education convinced me of the importance in working towards a better understanding of the law and its effects. Working in public schools for the past nine years as a school counselor, I had a certain narrow perception of the law, which I came to associate almost exclusively with what I felt to be draconian systems of accountability. As the standardized testing coordinator for our campus, a low-performing Title I school in a large urban district, I was privy to how much time and energy schools were devoting to ensuring students performed adequately on a given test. In a typical year, our campus might spend close to a month administering benchmark tests, field tests and the actual state test. In such a test-driven environment, I saw teachers working desperately to get their students to passing level, and I saw students become physically ill before each test administration. Given the emphasis placed on testing in this elementary school and the levels of stress I observed teachers experiencing, my first questions about the law related to how teachers saw themselves as being affected by the stresses of standardized testing (Wood, 2003). When their responses indicated they were less worried about what testing was doing to them and more about what it was doing to the education of children, I realized I needed to expand my view of how the law might be impacting schools.

In moving this project beyond being an examination of the effects of accountability, I thought about what the teachers were telling me. If education at the campus level was being changed, why was this happening? How was what the law envisioned as education different that what teachers identified as important? If such discrepancies existed, who was communicating about such problems? Since NCLB was in part a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which was in turn a child of the Civil Rights Movement, I wanted to gain some understanding of how the law was serving students, particularly those with the most need. In order to do this, I would need to step back from my education perspective and look at the law through different eyes. Since I had such a limited understanding of the law, I wanted to delve first into the historical side of education movements in America in order to understand what views might be contributing to the tenets of NCLB. I also felt it important to explore what policy makers were drawing on when making decisions about the scope and content of the law. Ultimately, these sources would be combined with the voices of educators working within NCLB in order to gain some understanding of my perception of divide between policy and practice.

In order to provide some order to this project, the paper is sectioned as follows. The first chapter of the paper represents a historical and theoretical overview for NCLB. Within this chapter is the first section where one finds a "state of the state" overview. Information presented here addresses some of the present day concerns faced by researchers, educators and politicians about the influence of NCLB. The second section and third sections of the paper seek to reveal public and private interests that have contributed to discussions historically surrounding public education in the U.S. This is important in identifying the various voices, theories, value sets and belief systems that

have gained some prominence in the debate over education and helps to situate NCLB historically in terms of these visions for education in America. A historical understanding could also contribute to some clarity regarding gaps or fissures in the discussion and could illuminate areas that should be addressed in order to advance the discussion between the levels of administration and practice.

Through the exploration of historical influences and trends in the dialogue surrounding public education, it is possible to identify enduring dilemmas that infiltrate policy creation and implementation in America. The final section of Chapter One will seek to gain some clarity regarding these dilemmas, dilemmas that may be practical or philosophical in nature. In an effort to provide a lens though which to approach a better understanding of these dilemmas, I plan to offer a brief discussion identifying several theoretical perspectives that could contribute to strengthening the relationship between policy and practice. In order to provide a base for such a discussion, I will use ideas presented by Michel Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972). Important ideas advanced by his work include how discourse boundaries are created and how bodies of discourse, including the specific use of language within a defined discourse, are developed and serve to invite or exclude individuals from participating in a given discussion. I will also use the work of Jurgen Habermas from his Communication Action Theory to gain a deeper understanding of how dialogue and understanding may be fostered through the construct of the Ideal Speech Situation. Finally, I will access the works of Jaques Ellul, Pierre Bordieu, John Polkinghorne, Jurgen Habermas and the work of Frank Richardson in an attempt to identify concerns regarding the over-reliance on

technique by modern society, and the possibility offered by hermeneutics for advancing dialogue.

Chapter Three of the dissertation provides a discussion of the proposed study. Qualitative work involving interviews with teachers and administrators, along with an analysis of archival congressional data is described. Chapter Four contains an analysis of congressional hearings contributing to the content of NCLB. It also contains a brief overview of the law itself. Such an analysis of the text of NCLB could hopefully add some clarity to the discussion surrounding the law, both as part of a process in education that has continued for forty years, and as its own entity as a living, working legal document and a product of U.S. policy makers. In order to come to some understanding of how this policy was developed through formal legislative hearings, I will analyze the transcripts of hearings from the House and Senate. In performing a close reading of these transcripts, I will look for the use of language by policy makers in the context of education discourse, interests and values expressed regarding education. By doing this close reading, I hope to gain a better understanding of similarities and differences that exist between the levels of policy and practice. A second discussion section would review the titles of NCLB in an attempt to describe ideas from these discussions that became part of the final policy and would highlight requirements unique to this policy that would have direct impact on practice. This section would include brief reviews of the titles of the policy, the stated intentions for each title, and the projected benefits or outcomes for each title.

In order to clarify and advance the dialogue surrounding NCLB, I believe it is important to access the individuals responsible for implementing the policy. As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, it is important to see if practitioners have the language and experience with the policy that would ease introduction into the discourse. It also seems important to hear from practitioners about the effects the policy has had on the daily performance of their duties as educators. Chapters Four and Five contain the results of these interviews. Finally, I am most interested in how the language, values and beliefs implicit in NCLB intersect those of the individual practitioner. To this end, I am interested in their responses to similarities and differences in beliefs about teaching and learning that are highlighted when the policy is implemented. In many ways, I see the ultimate purpose of this paper as a forum for practitioners to gain some clarity about their own values and beliefs about education and to understand how such clarity could smooth entrance into the larger discourse about the meanings and purposes of education in America.

Chapter One: Historical and Theoretical Backdrop

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND DEBATES

The No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law on January 8, 2002. Although much of the roughly 1100 pages of text was simply a reauthorization of previous education policy including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, this new piece of legislation introduced more stringent requirements for the measurement of student progress and the use of science-based instructional practices (Gordon, 2003), particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics, along with the possibility of sanctions for schools that failed to meet the standards for all identified student groups. While the need for such government oversight had been recognized by each presidential administration following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, there seemed to be some ambivalence at the federal level about the government's role in public education, which in the past, had largely been left to the control of local school districts. The U. S. Department of Education, which was established under the Carter Administration in an attempt to create a national institution that would provide more input and oversight from the federal level, fell out of favor with President Reagan, an advocate for local control of education. Given this level of presidential disapproval, rumors began to circulate that the Department would be shut down (Ravitch, 2003). However, *A Nation at Risk* injected a sense of urgency into education reform, an urgency that stemmed from the fear that the U. S. was being left behind by other countries, especially in the fields of science and mathematics. This warning was made explicit in the opening lines of the report, with the idea that we must fight against "a rising tide of

mediocrity" (Gordon, 2003); the mediocrity that was education in America. That education was now a national concern echoed in the following words from *A Nation at Risk* as highlighted by Gordon (2003): "[i]f an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war".

The excellence movement arose as a federal-level response to this call for action, and drove the institution of top-down reforms that raised requirements for students seeking to graduate from high school, and for teachers seeking certification (Furhman, 2003). Course offerings in public schools came under scrutiny with advanced science and math courses being introduced to replace vocational and liberal arts classes labeled as "fluff" by conservative educators and business concerns. Business leaders, worried about remaining competitive in a global market, expressed support for such government intervention. In response to what was perceived as an encroachment on local turf by the federal government, local districts championed the restructuring movement, which introduced "bottom-up" approaches to reform, including site-based management. Such management emphasized the ability of the individual campus to decide what was best for its students and teachers and engaged teachers, parents and local community members in the decision-making process. Policymakers at federal and state levels demonstrated support for this movement, no doubt as a result of feedback from their constituencies, but as a result of the work of the Republican Senator from Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, who drew his experiences as the former Secretary of Education from 1992-93, these politicians required more accountability from local districts (Furman, 2003).

In this push to establish accountability as part of current education policy, there was little discussion at federal levels about what this accountability would look like or how it might function at state and local levels, and so strict definitions and requirements were not built into federal policy written through the 1990's, including President Clinton's "Goals 2000." That these concrete, defining discussions were largely absent from education dialogue was noted by the creators of NCLB, who in turn sought to give districts the flexibility to determine how to best assess their programs and students; in effect, defining accountability at the state and local levels. Along with this intent, it might be argued that policy makers behind NCLB also recognized the importance of addressing criticism that the law was an attempt by the federal government to seize control of public education by allowing for more local input. But with the very real possibility for sanctions against states and districts failing to meet standards, school leaders were less interested in choice and more interested in what types of systems of accountability would allow them to meet federal standards. As part of a series of interviews sponsored by the Harvard University College of Education, Harvard Professor Richard Elmore (2003) characterized such accountability as coming from an increased sense of public mistrust in how schools educate children and how they spend money in pursuit of this education. He also cited an increase in the belief that schools must be scrutinized to ensure they are doing the right things for children. Given such an increasing political influence in education policy coupled with rising expectations for student performance by the public, the time was ripe for the country to embrace the standards movement that had gained momentum from the initial fear-driven reactions to

A Nation at Risk and carried the impetus through to the authorization of The No Child Left Behind Act.

Throughout the country, various local districts began working to create uniform curricula along with assessments to measure student progress, and some of these efforts were being attempted at the state level. In Texas, the home state of President George W. Bush, the Texas Education Agency worked in the late 1980's and early 1990's to develop the Essential Elements, which provided uniform instructional goals and objectives for subjects taught in public schools. Texas was also at work on a system of standardized tests known as the Texas Education Assessment of Minimum Standards (TEAMS), which assessed basic skills in mathematics and reading and was initially intended for use a diagnostic instrument designed to inform instruction. Gradually, the assessment program morphed and expanded, first into a high stakes testing measure known as the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and then into the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). By the late 1990's, this program of assessment positioned Texas as a leader in the standards movement, even while researchers and watchdog groups such as Fairtest questioned the highly touted academic gains measured by such standardized assessment programs. In his analysis of testing practices from the state of Texas, Haney (2000) alleged that data from the results of state standardized testing was incorrectly reported, masking what were essentially inflated gains in student performance, particularly in the Houston school district led by then superintendent Rod Paige. However, at the time that NCLB was conceived early 2001, these criticisms were largely absent from the debate, and when it came time to reauthorize ESEA, George W.

Bush referenced the data from Texas, where he had been governor, as an example of how the standards movement was improving student learning.

In his initial proposal for NCLB, Bush placed an emphasis on high standards and accountability. He also pushed for an increase in literacy levels, and the hiring of highly qualified teachers. Parental choice became a hot topic, with parents having more options regarding which school they could send children to as a result of an increase in the number of charter schools and the possibility of a voucher plan being introduced. Flexibility was another buzzword, with districts being given the ability to dictate how monies would best be spent to educate children. These measures drew strong bipartisan support, possibly because most of these were not new ideas, and had been under consideration in some form since ESEA was reauthorized in 1994. According to an analysis of George W. Bush's education plan developed by the Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights (2001), NCLB incorporated measures supported in the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA. These measures included setting content standards and creating assessments for reading and math, providing copies of assessment results to parents, reporting assessment data in a format that is disaggregated by race, gender, disability, English proficiency and economic status, requiring that districts be given yearly performance report cards and providing assistance to schools and children in need of intervention. However, NCLB took the program one step more. Daniel Koretz (2002) in a Harvard faculty response to NCLB boils it down to a few simple ideas: "you assess student performance using measures you think are sufficient to summarize what kids have learned over a long period of time; you set very ambitious targets for improvement in

scores on tests; you require continual improvement; then you reward and punish". The pressure in these few words is undeniable; the stakes are high, and given the current level of transparency called for where district test scores are published on the front page of the local newspaper and districts receive both state and federal yearly progress reports, districts that fail run the risk of a very public punishment.

Large school districts in Texas, such as Houston ISD and Dallas ISD, have not been immune to charges of testing irregularities, with one elementary school in Houston going from being low-performing one year, with most students failing portions of the TAKS, to enjoying passing rates of over 90% the very next year, a gain that understandably drew scrutiny from TEA (Austin American Statesman, 2004). Given the level of pressure federal oversight adds, some states have resorted to bolder moves, with several, including Utah, threatening to forego federal funds in order to be free of the new regulations. In order to address the potential for such actions from schools, Koretz calls for a closer look into how programs instituted under NCLB are fairing. He decries education policy in general with "policymakers imposing risky interventions on people who do not give informed consent – including children – without feeling any obligation to find out what their policies do to people (4)".

Margaret Spelling, the newly appointed Secretary of Education, broadly addressed this idea in a recent editorial originally published in the Washington Post (Austin American Statesman, 2005). Although the piece was basically a reminder of all of the positive effects NCLB has had on student learning, she took the time to

acknowledge that discord between the states and the federal government as presented in the popular press opened up the possibility of a real dialogue regarding the implementation of NCLB. That we are not alone in this need to establish dialogue between the various levels of legislation and practice is evidenced by the current education climate in Great Britain, where a similar process of standardization was enacted in 1988 as the Education Reform Act (Olson, 2004). With the introduction of the Office of Standards in Education in 1992, schools in Britain could expect regular inspections, while according to Michael Fullan, who evaluated the British system of assessments, an unprecedented educational reform plan was put into place. Attitudes towards the accomplishments of the British plan have been generally positive, but questions have arisen that may provide some guidance into examining our policy in the U. S. A major problem seems to be in the low levels of trust held between politicians and the practitioners (Olson, 2003) (Troman & Woods, 2001), a concern that is echoed in the U.S. by teacher unions. There is also some worry about the impact of standardization on professional innovation as well as how such standardization and assessment contributes to a narrowing of the curriculum, again a concern of teacher unions and teacher preparation programs. Also in Britain, it has become a concern that if the education initiative is to succeed, there must be some movement from reform as a national prescription to reform that results out of school and practitioner initiative, so that there is a greater level of buy-in at the practitioner level (Olson, 2004). At this place in time, for educators in the U.S., NCLB remains largely a prescribed initiative (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2004) and the need to explore the input of practitioners into the implementation of this policy remains.

In the United States, university researchers, professional education organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), and various policy institutions such as RAND and Hoover, have had roughly four years to chart the progress of NCLB implementation and the results arising from such implementation. Much focus has been placed on accountability issues, particularly on high stakes testing. Studies such as those conducted by Amrein and Berliner (2002) have raised similar questions to those being raised in England, including concerns over diminished subject matter, and a lack of transferability of knowledge and skills used to pass state tests to the knowledge and skills needed to perform well on the SAT and NAEP. In addition, studies such as "The Texas Miracle" (2000) have called into question what test scores really mean in terms of student progress in learning, as well as charging that data has been manipulated to produce inflated results, often for underlying political purposes. That these studies have been vigorously attacked by other researchers and political analysts including Raymond and Hanushek of the Hoover Institute (2003) speaks to the enormous scrutiny being brought to bear on education, in addition to the high political stakes for those who support the policy.

Unfortunately, some of the dialogue threatens to reduce the discussion to name calling or political pandering. The Harvard Civil Rights Project, which analyzed the performance of NCLB, particularly as it impacted Title I implementation, encountered such resistance when researchers from the foundation began to question the Department of Education about NCLB. In the experience of the researchers described in the

introduction to their report on the policy, such questioning meant that you weren't for the policy, and if you weren't for the policy, you stood for mediocrity in education, and were content to leave some children behind, an attitude made explicit by then Education Secretary Rod Paige (Orfield, 2004). It was the attitude of the researchers that such an attitude served to foreclose on dialogue, as no one wants to be accused of hurting children. That the current Secretary, Margaret Spellings welcomes open and possibly contentious dialogue offers hope that more voices might be brought to the discussion regarding the implementation of NCLB and the results it is producing.

As briefly mentioned in the preceding paragraph, one organization that has taken time to conduct a close analysis of what this policy means for education in America is The Civil Rights Project housed at Harvard University. In February of 2004, the group published a paper exploring four different aspects of the policy and raised questions that the group believes need to be addressed to encourage success for the policy. The co-director of The Civil Rights Project, Gary Orfield, describes the intent of the NCLB as an inspiring vision, albeit one that has the potential to be the most controversial policy in the history of American education. That the policy seeks to establish a better and more demanding education for all students is admirable. However, Orfield is careful to remind the reader that while NCLB has desirable goals, it also asks for federal, state and local governments to adopt new roles in fulfilling the requirements of the policy, which makes the need for developing a dialogue between the levels of government and implementation all the more important. In considering the results of the report, Orfield laments what he sees as a limited understanding by the federal government of the realities that schools

face on a daily basis, not to mention, "the basic traditions of federal-state and professional relationships in educational policy" (3). Although the Civil Rights Project research praises the intent of much of NCLB to raise education standard for students most in need, Director Orfield emphasized that dialogue between those responsible for implementation and practice must be opened so that the government can gain a better understanding of how the policy is impacting the how we educate children. While NCLB seeks to raise the standard of education for all children, and in particular, those with the most need, the heavy top-down approach adopted by the current administration runs the risk of alienating the very people responsible for making the policy work. So what are some of the critical dialogue gaps identified by the researchers analyzing NCLB?

The Harvard Civil Rights Project report identifies four areas of interest to put under the lens. The first part of the report explores the expansion of federal power into what had traditionally been a local concern. The second section delves into concerns about resources and how these concerns are impacted by accountability. To illustrate this concern, one may consider how schools allocate funding. With new systems of accountability, schools may be forced to put monies toward testing programs such as benchmark testing to prepare students for the state level assessment. These programs, while very costly have come to be seen by many districts as a necessary component in the assessment process, and as necessary in achieving prized ratings on state and federal report cards. Since district funding generally comes from limited state and local coffers, other school programs may suffer from funds being moved to support testing. Given the recent federal court ruling on a suit brought by several large American school districts,

including the Austin Independent School District, that the federal government was under no obligation to fully fund every requirement of NCLB (Austin Independent School District Web Newsletter, 2005) it seems that this concern will continue to be part of the dialogue surrounding NCLB. Following this piece is an analysis which looks at the concept of school choice and how such choice affects those most in need. The final section addresses how schools approach the demand for supplemental education services designed to provide needed support and/or remediation to students in need, while working under increasing levels of federal and state bureaucracy and oversight. Each of the sections identified key levels of concern that the Civil Rights Project believes warrant further discussion and action. That these concerns are not new when placed within the historical context of American education indicates a need for a level of dialogue between policy makers and practitioners which has not yet been established.

A primary concern of educators at the state and local levels and politicians working at all levels of government involved how federal funding and the expectations accompanying such funding would impact the practice of education at the local level. Researchers, Sunderman and Kim, 2004, in the first of four studies described in the Harvard Civil Rights Project Report, sought to illuminate dilemmas in interfacing sources of funding with needs at the local district level. According to the report, there is the widespread distrust by states and local districts that they are being asked to provide programs and systems of assessment that may be under-funded, thus putting a financial burden on strapped school districts. The concern is echoed in much of the NCLB rhetoric coming from the NEA and this concern has been put into action through an NEA-backed

lawsuit challenging federal expectations in light of what the NEA sees as a critical lack of funding (Education Week, 2005). The basic thinking here seems to be if the current administration voices the importance of providing challenging education for all students, it needs to provide the money to make it happen, especially if schools run the risk of tough sanctions if they fail.

Beyond financial concerns, the researchers, in speaking with professional educators and local district administrators encountered conflict that stems from a long-held value in America; that education is the domain of the local government. Educators interviewed expressed resistance to what they perceived as a heavy-handed implementation of policy, and while researchers were clear that most districts seemed to be making a good faith effort to comply with NCLB, there was the possibility that resistance could strengthen and in turn undermine the ability of the policy to bring about desired and needed change. To address this point, the researchers have called for the government to expend more effort toward making vital connections with professional educators so that that those involved in implementing NCLB have some stake in molding the policy into one that more closely addresses needs at the campus level.

When researchers (Kim & Sunderman, 2004) from The Harvard Civil Rights Project explored the effects of the accountability mandates on local districts, they identified three key questions: 1) How do the accountability requirements of NCLB impact state accountability measures? 2) How did annual yearly progress (AYP) definitions affect the functioning of six diverse schools that were studied? and 3) How

were subgroups in California schools impacted by subgroup accountability measures? From their study, the following points were identified as springboards for further discussion. Of the schools studied, it was apparent that schools were having trouble with the transition from using locally developed measures to state developed measures and that there was some confusion about what an adequate system of assessment would look like. There were also concerns that yearly progress reports from states and the federal government did not match for some of the schools studied and that schools previously labeled as adequate or better on state reports could receive failing scores at the federal level. Such disparity in ratings has led to further distrust from local districts, especially when these reports are made public. The report also indicated that more discussion is needed to help schools tailor interventions to the specific needs of their students rather than pushing for blanket funding and intervention. It seems critical, as mentioned by Koretz (2003), that the federal government see students and those who work in schools as individuals and not numbers on a demographics chart or in a report of disaggregated data. Finally, the report called for a better understanding of what schools face when they are asked to meet performance standards for multiple subgroups, as in such schools, there is the possibility of receiving a failing rating because the one student in a subgroup fails, despite adequate performance campus-wide. These points are similar to those raised in the third part of the report. Kim and Sunderman (2004) indicate the need for failing schools to be examined on a case-by-case basis rather than immediately calling for mass student transfers as a result of such failure. Again, this involves getting to know schools at a more personal level and to be aware of the unique challenges found on individual campuses. However, they also called for more flexibility at the local level in working

with neighboring districts to ensure students have choices available that best meet their needs. And in the fourth section of the report, Kim and Sunderman (2004) again call for the for policy makers at the federal level to gain more understanding of the variety of challenges faced by schools in order to tailor interventions and funding more appropriately.

In looking at the recommendations of the four sections of the report, it is clear, according to The Civil Rights Project report, that one important message runs though all of their recommendations; that the federal government needs to expend more effort providing those responsible for policy implementation with opportunities to talk with the people most directly impacted by the NCLB, namely educators and the families served by public schools. This is vital to the success of NCLB, which The Civil Rights Project views as a policy with promise, but without practitioner buy-in, NCLB might not accomplish what it intends.

What is clear at this time, is that despite questions being raised about its performance from special interest groups, state governments and local school districts, NCLB, a law that reauthorized and expanded a platform of education reform that began with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, it is not going away. In fact, there are current plans under way that seek to expand the scope of reform to the secondary level (Austin American Statesman, 2005). And in a more recent article detailing information from a meeting with members of the American Federation of Teachers (Austin American Statesman, July 2005), Department of Education Secretary

Margaret Spellings suggested that the scope of assessment, which presents a major point of contention in discussion surrounding NCLB. Given that three-quarters of member teachers responding to a recent AFT survey indicated discontent with NCLB, with most decrying the lack of attention and funding for subjects other than reading and mathematics, something they see as narrowing the education experience for many students, it is clear that those engaged in the practice of teaching have some real concerns about the law. If the policy itself is to be expanded, it might be reasonable at this point to consider expanding the dialogue beyond congressional offices in an attempt to create a document that has the input of those directly affected by policy implementation, namely practitioners and the students and families served by public schools. It is important to consider ways of stretching the boundaries of dialogue to include more voices. But what would such dialogue look like? Education Secretary Margaret Spellings doesn't offer much assistance other than to declare that dialogue, even negative dialogue, is a healthy thing. And, she doesn't provide ideas about who might be included in the discussion (Spelling, 2005). Academicians and policy researchers appear to favor dialogue that helps to clarify the implementation of the policy and envision dialogue as an interface between levels of government and practice. It is hard to argue against the idea that dialogue can be a good thing or that it is helpful for people to work together to implement policy that will help children. However, it is important to note that the sources of disagreement, including those related to how policy will be implemented and who gets to dictate this implementation, have been part of the discussion surrounding education in America since modern public schools arose from normal schools in the late 19th century (Lagemann, 2000).

In recognizing that the struggle to establish such dialogue has a deep history, it becomes important to look for gaps in the discussion that could benefit from some clarity if the discussion to advance beyond partisan bickering or the same tired arguments that have been held between education idealogues for over 100 years. Education theorist Larry Cuban (2000) raises the point that we must look for a common good in education, which seems to suggest looking deeper into what we believe about educating children in the country and connecting these beliefs to our personal values about education. In an effort to appeal to practitioners to consider the role of government in education, he claims "it is short-sighted to dismiss the government as a superstructure of perpetual turmoil, unrelated to the improvement of kids and therefore unimportant" (p. 224). David Callahan, a critical social theorist, advances the appeal to include the need to consider values when evaluating social policy and the effects a policy has on individuals. By this, he refers to the need to come to some understanding of policy makers' intentions and levels of self-understanding as a lens through which to examine a policy's effectiveness and justice; that in effect, policies are created by individuals who bring their personal value systems to policy creation. He also stresses the importance of recognizing the political nature of policy development and how political agendas impact dialogue and implementation (1983).

Understandably, taking the current education dialogue to a level that addresses values and personal biases about what it means to educate children requires time and trust in order to build relationships where individuals are comfortable in sharing their beliefs.

Georg Lukacs (1971) who in his book, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, advocated for the voice of the worker to be included in work-related decision-making felt that as an individual worker embedded in the work process, he or she was in a unique position to contribute to a body of dialogue. However, Lukacs also noted that fears of reprisal, including the loss of a job prevented workers from contributing ideas. And even for those teachers who have taken the risk and spoken up about the current path education has taken, the experience has proven to be thankless at best. From his thoughtful essay in Harper's Magazine (2003), it is clear that John Gatto, a former New York state, and New York City Teacher of the Year, has attempted to stand up for what he believes are education values worth protecting. However, at the end of his paper, the best advice he is able to offer to the practitioner is to go into the classroom and teach what they think is best for their students and to leave the running of schools to politicians and bureaucrats. In light of increasing incursions of federally-mandated systems of accountability into the individual classroom, this idea seems like a dream from some long ago time. Given the potential risks involved for workers, the amount of time needed to create relationships built on trust and respect and what appears to be an overwhelming top-down momentum in education governance, why does it remain important to try to foster a deeper dialogue in education?

According to work done by Carol Weiss of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1983), policy makers listen to social science research in order to gain some understanding of how a particular social system works, which in turn affects how policy is developed. It stands to reason that research that introduces the voices of practitioners

to the policy development process could help build a stronger relationship between policy and practice by building trust for and an understanding of what teachers do. During my sixteen years in education, gained through work at the secondary and elementary levels of public schools, I have been exposed to these voices and have had the opportunity to gain some understanding of what these voices have to offer those working beyond the level of practice. All of my work experience has been in Title I schools and with student groups identified as needing special intervention under NCLB. Since I am employed in Texas, I have witnessed first hand the impact of high stakes standardized testing and the introduction of more stringent systems of accountability. Like the researchers at The Civil Rights Project, I have seen positive results from NCLB. Due to the disaggregation of test data, schools have been forced to pay more attention to certain student groups, including those with disabilities or limited skills in English. The public display of federal and state school report cards in local media has made school performance more transparent to parents, business leaders and other community stakeholders. However, because NCLB is largely a top-down standards-based mandate, workers at the campus level may feel they have little input into the decision making process and, as Kim and Sundermann (2004) noted, may exhibit little buy-in.

In a previous qualitative pilot study that asked teachers about speaking out regarding education matters (Wood, 2002), teachers at a Title I elementary school told me that they were largely afraid to voice their opinions, because according to what they had observed at local school board meetings it was bad if your name became known at the central administration office. One veteran teacher, a strong intelligent woman, who

acted as a leader on campus, said that she had observed what happened to others who spoke out at board meetings, so she kept her opinions to herself. Although this level of apprehension at speaking out may not be representative of all campuses, it gives some indication that obstacles to open discussion about NCLB between practitioners at the campus level and high-level administrators exist. These sentiments do not appear to be isolated. On October 21, 2004, a Town Hall meeting on the No Child Left behind Act sponsored by The National Academy of Education, The National Society for the Study of Education and Kappa Delta Pi, the International Honor Society of Education was held on the campus of the University of Texas. The words of Ben Kramer, a principal at a local elementary school, and invited speaker, were especially provocative; for him, one simply "cannot teach in a fear-driven enterprise". From his perspective, now is the time to respond to NCLB given that the public has had several years to live with the policy, and may have access to language that will allow for a more informed dialogue about its impacts on practice. Teachers who spoke at the end of the meeting expressed concerns about being heard, but most voiced the same frustrations and fears regarding finding appropriate venues for joining the discussion. Unfortunately, the panel, which included respected education scholar Nell Noddings was unable to offer little in the way of new ideas.

At a second Title I school, I encountered dialogue being squelched in a more subtle way; one that I believe it very much a function of how schools are being asked to operate under the weight of requirements of NCLB. Members of the campus leadership team, which included the principal, instructional coaches and grade level lead teachers

met to plan instructional goals and strategies for the coming year. As this campus enjoys a reputation for encouraging worker input, I looked forward to seeing open discussion about the direction the campus would take for the coming school year. The meeting was facilitated by a support specialist from the district central administration office so that the team could receive feedback regarding the interface between district and campus expectations. As the discussion progressed, much of the talk centered around how goals would be carried out in terms of instructional methodology, and for the most part, team members worked efficiently to come to some agreement on which techniques could best be used to advance the practice of instruction. However, as I listened closely to what was being said by the teachers, it became apparent that the points of discussion to which team members returned sprang from a deeper level than that of technique or methodology, it went to the heart of what teachers value in terms of knowledge and learning, as well as fundamentally what it means to be a teacher. When I pointed this out to the committee, several members nodded in agreement. I also noted that in a reading provided by the facilitator, it was emphasized that teams must be aware of personal value systems and beliefs when attempting to develop a strong, effective working relationship. The principal recognized my contribution, but seemed hesitant to take the discussion to a more personal level. In fact when one teacher expressed his frustration about coming to consensus regarding what would be taught, it was suggested by the principal that ultimately, the vision for the campus was hers and that those who couldn't get on board might be happier somewhere else. To sidestep more arguments, she commented that we had much to do in terms of concrete planning and not enough time to spend pursuing a

discussion that would likely lead to no resolution about the meanings of learning and teaching.

From a practical sense, I could appreciate her argument – there was much to be done and district expectations for campuses to address the requirements of NCLB and to put their plans in writing were high. At the same time, I wondered what it was like for the persons on the team who had some real problems with what was being proposed in terms of teaching and learning, but were effectively silenced in the name of efficiency. It seemed to me though, that if we did not find a way to acknowledge the deeper concerns of both teachers and administrators, what we put into place instructionally would be accepted at a surface level and that the campus ran the risk of teachers covertly working against methods and requirements put into place by the central office and campus level administration. In my position as the school counselor, I saw evidence of this covert resistance, which appeared as teachers struggled during the school year to define grade level teaching and learning goals and as the upper grade level teachers fought to prepare the students for the TAKS. Teachers with classes of low performing students chose to slow down instruction to meet student needs, which put their classes at risk for failing district mandated nine weeks and benchmark exams, and the campus at risk for censure by central office superintendents. Some teachers chose to return to methods of instruction that were more in keeping with personal teaching philosophies and risked the displeasure of the principal. Thus workers who expressed a need to be heard were shut out in name of efficiency and fissures were created between staff members and administration.

At a personal level, this was a galvanizing experience. Although I have seen the benefits of NCLB, I have also seen what a failure to address the values and belief systems of the practitioners responsible for implementing policy has wrought at the Title I campuses much of NCLB is designed to support (See Appendix B for a more detailed history of my experiences in public education). In my own pilot work, I have heard teachers express fear of speaking and of not knowing avenues for engaging those above them in dialogue. And I have also had teachers indicate they feel those responsible for developing policy have little understanding of the effects implementation has on teachers and students (Wood, 2003), a sentiment echoed by the findings of The Civil Rights Project. With these experiences in mind, it seems critical that we seek to bridge the gap between policy makers and those responsible for implementing policy if we are to create legislation that more intelligently addresses the realities faced by our public schools.

AMERICAN EDUCATION REFORM: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In order to gain some understanding of the influences contributing to the creation of NCLB, it is important to gain some historical perspective regarding the prevailing influences in American education over the past 175 years. Two early influences are found in the persons of Horace Mann and William T. Harris (Reese, 2000). Horace Mann's primary contribution to education in America was to open its doors to the common man. First as a legislator, a founder of the *Common School Journal* and then as an education official in the early and mid 1800's, Mann sought to identify the roots of

social turmoil that were keeping young Americans from recognizing their potentials as productive adults. He believed that America was performing a disservice to its youth by failing to educate all children, a process that could introduce to them the level of self-discipline necessary to serve society. For Mann, education served to provide a form of social control that helped to prepare children for life in an increasingly complex society. Where before, schooling was conducted privately for the children of privilege, now through the development of the common schools, education would be offered to the children of the masses. Ultimately for Mann, education was less about passing on bodies of academic knowledge and more about acting as an instrument of cultural transmission regarding moral actions. Such moral actions might include expressing one's loyalty to America as a citizen and becoming a contributing member of society. That Mann would have concerns about these particular moral actions is unsurprising given the large influx of immigrants requiring assimilation into his vision of the American Dream.

Drawing on the work of Horace Mann, William T. Harris, an early president of the National Education Association and later U.S. Commissioner of Education, sought to champion the right of all children to attend public schools. Working after the Civil War, Harris believed that public education could best meet the needs of a society that was moving away from its rural, agrarian roots, even though at the time many children lived in the countryside. Like Mann, Harris believed in the importance of education for teaching morality, but as influenced by German philosophy and pedagogy, he also saw education as a means by which to introduce children to a specified curriculum or a "common stock of ideas." Instruction in mathematics, language, history, science, geography and the arts would enable any student equal access to a better standard of living. Like Mann, the work of Harris came under fire, primarily from critics espousing

segregation in education and the increase in vocational services provided by schools. In the end, both men helped to define and develop public education in America, and served to provide a position against which modern education thinkers continue to pit their ideas. That ideals espoused by both men in regard to the purposes of public education ignited a discussion that has continued to today, as evident in the writing of John Gatto (2003). Gatto reiterates the main goals of schooling, as envisioned by Mann, Harris and their supporters as: "making good people, making good citizens and making each person his or her personal best" (p. 35). While he admits to the pervasiveness of these basic premises for schooling, even in the modern period, he objects to the underlying social engineering agenda that appears to permeate such aims. Since both Harris and Mann looked to Germany as an example of schooling done correctly, Gatto addresses what he terms the Prussianization of American education, where in the words of H. L. Mencken (1924), the main purpose of education was to produce a standard citizenry that was obedient and homogeneous. In Gatto's brief accounting of historical influences, he describes the work of Alexander Ingles (1918) as promoting the same lines of thinking about the purposes of education as Mann and Harris. In Ingles's work, six purposes of schooling were outlined: schools were expected to instill predictable reactions to authority, make children essentially the same, determine the proper societal role for each child, train children in order for each to reach his or her proper role as dictated by the education system, label those children exhibiting inferior functioning and to create a small selective group of students that would continue to manage this social endeavor. Given this less than favorable recital of historical influences, it is apparent in the mind of Gatto that these philosophical influences springing from Prussia, have contributed greatly to the standards movement that has gained momentum throughout the 20th century and has found purchase in NCLB to the detriment of American teachers and students.

Not all thinkers sought to advance the traditional German model of education. In the 1930's, George Counts, a sociologist from Teacher's College, and an activist for the American Federation of Teachers sought to modernize the teachings of Mann and Harris by rethinking the purposes of modern public education. (Perlstein, 2000) While Counts understood the view of education as a means for the common person to advance his or her position in society, he balked at what he felt to be an emphasis of individual growth over the growth of society. According to Counts, the time for individual concerns had passed, and Americans must turn towards an education that would solidify them as a society. In an address to the Progressive Education Association in 1932, he went so far as to claim the purpose of education was to indoctrinate young Americans with shared democratic commitments. Understandably, such a charge sparked great public debate, and while at first glance his ideas do not look radically different from the model of education as a social program as espoused by Mann and Harris, Counts had some very different goals in mind. Where Mann and Harris tended to focus on the students, Counts targeted teachers as the persons most fit too carry out such social agendas, painting them in a romanticized Marxist light as individuals who represent the "common interests of the people." So that they might better approach this role, Counts urged teachers to maintain a role divorced from business interests and with an eye towards their inevitably politicized role in the reorganization of public education. Although Counts's vision was never fully realized, his thoughts about the connection between social concerns and education remain very much in play:

> [Schooling] does not simply reflect a culture or civilization. Nor is it derived automatically through a process of assembling and analyzing data. Always at the point where an educational program comes into being, definite choices are made

> among many possibilities. And these choices are made, not by the gods or the laws of nature, but by men and women working both individually and collectively – by men and women who are moved by all of those forces and considerations which move them into other realms of conduct, by their knowledge and understanding, their hopes and fears, their purposes and loyalties, their views of the world and human destiny, and their positions of power in the social structure. (1971b: 1-2)

It must be acknowledged that this hardly sounds like a person advocating for the creation of a citizenry designed to act as sheep. And equally as important, by advancing his argument, Counts provided a position against which other groups including the liberals of the early to mid 1900's could better formulate their own ideas about the course of education in America.

With the future of America's youth at stake, experts in the field of education including John Dewey, G.Stanley Hall and Edward L. Thorndike weighed in with what were often competing theories about the nature and purpose of public education. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, in *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research* (2000), describes some of the ideas that pervaded the practice of education and research into practice from the time of the normal schools in the late 1800's. In the early years, according to Lagemann, the primary voices informing the practice of education tended to fall along two lines; those of education experts who felt that education should be informed through university-driven research and the communal input of persons working as practitioners in the school setting. This rift in approach was illustrated in the following philosophical differences represented by Thorndike and Dewey in detailing the purposes of education and who would be allowed to contribute to the dialogue surrounding education research and practice. For Dewey, education represented a vehicle for social change. In order to achieve such a lofty goal, Dewey envisioned the enterprise

of education as being one of open communication between practitioners and researchers, where all voices had import. In contrast, Thorndike favored a more hierarchical approach, with university experts performing the research that would inform the practice of education. This hierarchy was explicit in the following statement: "It is the problem of the higher authorities of the schools to decide what the schools shall try to achieve and to arrange plans for the school work that will attain the desired ends. Having decided what changes are to be made, they entrust to the teachers the work of making them." (60). In this view, the perspective of the teacher is not sought because the teacher is seen merely as a conveyer of knowledge dictated by experts. According to Thorndike, adding the voices of parents, teachers and children to the discussion on education only served to muddy the research and he went so far as to advise his students not to spend much time in schools because little could be gained from naturalistic observation (Lagemann, 2000). The struggle for the inclusion of the voice of the practitioner is very much a part of the contemporary dialogue surrounding education research, policy and practice as the transcripts from the NCLB hearing illustrate in a later section of this paper.

With the composition of the American population shifting from an agrarian-based rural society to an urban industrialized one, more voices joined in the mix. In addition to and in competition with the voice of the university expert came the voice of the captain of industry. In his seminal work, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (1962), Raymond Callahan analyzed the social forces that have influenced the development of public schools in America for roughly 100 years. According to Callahan, the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century had a profound impact in education as it moved into the 1900's. While this impact was first felt over 100 years ago, the problems faced by

society at the turn of the century mirror many of the problems face by Americans today including the consolidation of industry and the concentration of wealth, an influx of immigrants which led to issues regarding diversity, the increased depletion of natural resources and perceptions of corruption in the government (3), with such concerns continuing to influence the development of education policy and practice. From this charged atmosphere arose the struggle for control of American education, a struggle that pitted career educators against business leaders. That there was much strong feeling about who and what should inform the nature and purpose of education may be found in the words of Andrew Carnegie as he decried the usefulness of a traditional education:

> He believed that men had been sending their sons to colleges 'to waste energies upon obtaining a knowledge of such languages as Greek and Latin, which are of no more practical use to them than Choctaw…. They have in no sense received instruction. On the contrary what they have obtained has served to imbue them with false ideas and to give them a distaste for practical life. I do not wonder that a prejudice has arisen and still exists against such education. (p. 9)

For Carnegie and other business leaders, a system of education that did not prepare students for the realities of the working world was useless and potentially harmful. And to a certain extent, this sentiment was entertained by the education community as evidenced in the keynote speeches given at the 1908 meeting of the National Education Association (NEA), where attendees were urged to make the thrust of education more practical. This belief system was advanced further at the 1909 meeting of the NEA, where one industry leader made it clear that the purpose of education was to "direct the desire of youth toward 'acquisition by learning'" (p. 10). For this businessman,

> …a love of learning is praiseworthy; but when this delight in the pleasures of learning becomes so intense and so absorbing that it diminishes the desire, and the power of earning, it is positively harmful. Education that does not promote the desire and power to do useful things – that's earning – is not worth getting. Education that stimulates a love for useful activity is not simple desirable, it is in the highest degree ethical…Personally, I would rather send out pupils who are lop-sided and useful than, those who are seemingly symmetrical and useless. (p. 10)

Based on these and other like perspectives, the purpose of education was to produce workers for the burgeoning industries and to produce consumers of the new products readily available for consumption. Learning for the sake of learning was derided as an idle and fruitless pursuit and the historical methods of educating students were hopelessly outmoded in their understanding of how to produce desirable citizens. The influence of the business community expanded beyond what would be taught to how students would be taught through the infiltration of efficiency theory into practice. In promoting these new methods of pedagogy, the voices of teachers were conspicuously absent. Arising from the prevailing business goal of efficiency in production, one proposed method was based on the work of Frederick Taylor, which was first tested in labor-intensive trades and assembly line processes. According to Taylor, the principle of scientific management would allow for greater productivity in industry and it was likely that this system could be translated into the field of education.

From prior research where he described the general laziness and often haphazard attitude of workers, Taylor developed four principles that management could use to ensure a more consistent output from workers. The first principle called for a specific

detailing of each aspect of the worker's duties; little decision-making would be left to the individual worker. In a school system, this would translate into a prescribed curriculum that would be delivered by the teacher; there would be no deviation from this plan. The second principle advocated for the scientific training and development of the worker. Management would make any decisions about where a particular worker would be placed. For teachers, this could mean placement at a particular grade level or in a particular school without much choice being offered, and any teacher preparation would be standardized to fit government guidelines. The third principle called for management to work with the workers to ensure that the principles of efficiency were being carried out in the workplace. Obviously, this calls for a high level of oversight from administrators and put in place a paternalistic relationship where teachers are the children needing supervision. In the final principle, management was expected to take responsibility for running the enterprise while workers were responsible for doing as they were directed. Once again, this underscores the propensity of the efficiency movement to create a hierarchy where those at the practitioner level do not have input into the performance of the job, a problem that Orfield (2003) argues is very much embedded in the implementation of NCLB.

However, the view of education as a vehicle for producing America's workforce in the most economical manner was not the only view drawing support in the 20th century. At the community level, citizens were asking questions about their inherent rights to education and their concerns about the purveyance of said education. For example, the researchers at The Harvard Civil Rights Project do not normally address

matters of education in their search to determine effectiveness of American social policy targeted at impoverished and minority populations. However, as mentioned in the introduction, they have recognized the undeniable foundation of NCLB as the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which arose directly out of the Civil Rights Movement. This early legislation introduced the government to a more central role in American education with the guarantee that all children, regardless of race or poverty level had the right to a free and equal public education. Government oversight was somewhat limited at this time and focused on ensuring that local schools complied with desegregation requirements. At this time, federal funding was also provided specifically to help students of poverty. This type of funding became part of the Title I initiative and has continued as a resource that was reauthorized under NCLB. It is relatively easy to draw connections between the early goal of having all children attend school together and the ubiquitous promise that "we will leave no child behind" found throughout current rhetoric. However, the vision of the ESEA has been expanded dramatically under NCLB to include children with special needs and children, typically new to America, known as English Language Learners. And where the original policy looked to provide the right to a certain equality in education, NCLB, and Title I specifically, calls for proof that such education is effective for all students and that schools must be held accountable for educating all students to a prescribed level.

THE LAST TWENTY YEARS: THE INDELIBLE INFLUENCE OF *A NATION AT RISK*

From the preceding section, it is clear that reform has been part of the education landscape since public schools arose from normal schools in the late 1800's, with the *Report of the Committee of Ten* setting the tone in 1893 by calling for a strong academic preparation for all students so that they might better face the rigors of life (Ravitch, 2003). While later education-focused committees continued into the 20th century with the tradition of making pronouncements regarding the purposes of education, according to Ravitch such pronouncements were basically ignored by the general public. In examining reasons for such an apparent disconnect, Ravitch cites the fact, that for the most part, such treatises on education tended to be written by education professionals for other education professionals, which effectively closed the general public and policymakers out of the discussion. So how was *A Nation at Risk* different, and why does it continue to impact discussions on education today?

For Ravitch, a primary strength of *A Nation at Risk* lies in its language. It accused public schools of perpetrating such a low level of academic standards that the American people should be outraged and incited them to take action. For the people of this country, the threat that Americans could fall behind other countries in term of economic prosperity due to poor schooling was made very real through the comparisons to students from other countries. In order to address these concerns, the report laid out several goals. As described by Ravitch, the report called for high academic expectations for all children, a sentiment that would become a cornerstone of NCLB. And in what sounds very much

like current rhetoric, contributors to the report " held that 'All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost' " (p. 34). It is apparent in the words of the report that the purpose of public education was to produce students who would be active contributors to the American economy as producers and consumers. Classes that strayed too far beyond the core academic curriculum were deemed fluff, useless for preparing young people to compete in a global market. For this committee, academic rigor was valued, but its value was closely tied to the financial ends it appeared to guarantee. And with its emphasis on providing some level of standards for schools in order to produce workers that could compete on a world stage, it presaged the federal government's expanding role in public education in America.

However, not all education researchers have been as drawn to the call to action *A Nation at Risk* provided. In his book, *School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice and Performance* (2004), Richard Elmore, the Gregory Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, likens the initial premise of *A Nation at Risk* and its influence on subsequent education policy as prepping Americans for a "horse trade." According to Elmore, this trade was originally conceived as states agreeing to meet certain imposed standards in exchange for maintaining local discretion as to how standards could be met. However, it is not clear that the agreement has been upheld. Central to Elmore's concern is the gradual shift of control of local education from state and local entities to federal departments under NCLB. In order to keep the promise made by the federal government to the American people that academic

standards will be met for all students by 2014, government oversight in the form of progress reports and funding stipulations has in fact decreased state and local decision-making capacities.

Since education policy increasingly focuses on the achievement of set standards through systems of assessment, it is increasingly questionable whether schools truly have the promised flexibility to address local needs. When coupled with the fact that the government has proposed few inroads to addressing how teachers actually teach and schools function on a daily basis, it appears America is left with policy makers dictating policy, and teachers continuing to teach in the way they have been taught, with neither group receiving satisfaction. Elmore cites theories of federalism and the concept of comparative advantage, where the various levels of government negotiate their roles under a particular policy based on which administrative level has the capacity to be the most responsive to those directly affected by the policy, and indicates that such negotiations have been circumvented in the rush to "improve" education. Elmore believes that the push towards a blanket policy, such as NCLB, managed from the federal level removes too much authority and flexibility from persons working at the level closest to students and parents. As a consequence of control being shifted to the federal level, Elmore indicates that the divide between policy makers and practitioners has widened, much to the detriment of policy implementation and actual education reform. (Cuban, 1993) (Sarason, 1993) (Tyak, 1994) (Tyack & Cuban, 1995)

Although *A Nation at Risk* functioned as a call to action for policy makers, the Education Summit of 1989 between then-president George Bush and state governors led by Bill Clinton set in motion reform agendas that ultimately came to rest in NCLB. What made this meeting noteworthy was that leaders from all states sought to come to some understanding of a common strategy for educating America's youth. As then education secretary Lamar Alexander envisioned the relationship between the levels of government, federal and state levels would build a policy aimed at results and local governments and schools would focus on methods necessary to achieve those results. These ideas percolated through various state reforms over the next few years, and became part of mainstream discussion in Congress when the reauthorization of titles in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act arose. For Elmore, the federal government undertook a daunting task in creating such an expansive piece of legislation as NCLB. While the government set certain standards for states to follow, he argues that policy makers simply did not put the time into considering the nature of instruction, knowledge and skill accessed by those at the level of practice. Just as important has been the failure to acknowledge that those who work in schools do have a vested interest in student success and that to enforce sanctions largely at the level of practice does not address deeper, moral or philosophical concerns of education reform. Based on this thinking, reform becomes more about how to manage change and less about what change actually means for students and teachers. Although Elmore provides a compelling critique of the decision-making that led to the creation of NCLB, he acknowledges the possibility of pressures to reform the American education system stemming from state constituencies helped set the stage for the bipartisan acceptance of the legislation in Congress.

PERSISTING DILEMMAS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

From the brief historical overview it is apparent that the concerns of diverse interest groups are reflected in the larger discourse that has surrounded public education in America since its early years. Such ongoing concerns point to the existence of long-standing dilemmas in modern education that individuals working at the levels of policy and practice are struggling to clarify. Evans Clinchy, a senior consultant at the Institute for Responsive Education at Northeastern University, illuminates some of these dilemmas in *Reforming American Education from the Bottom to the Top* (1999). In his introduction, Clinchy describes what he sees as a dilemma involving the control of public education. For Clinchy, with the advent of national standards, schools will be under tremendous pressure to respond to the federal government regarding adherence to standards and performance on required indicators. At the same time, schools must be responsive to the needs of local stakeholders including students, parents and other community members. Stanford professor of education, Larry Cuban, and Columbia University assistant professor of education, Dorothy Shipps (2000), cite viewpoints of various education reformers, changes in the functioning of modern society including increased mobility, the spread of cultural diversity across the country and the influence of technology that have created a need for education to be managed from a state or federal level. Other reformers believe that these government entities should adopt a more neutral role that supports the positions of local stakeholders.

Couched within this dilemma is the assumption that the federal government and local stakeholders may have different ideas about how children should be educated and how success is measured in schools. There is also some idea that what is considered a common good for public education somehow differs from the private good of local stakeholders (Cuban & Shipps, 2000). In addition to being a dilemma about who will control schools, this push and pull between federal and local levels also involves identifying the purposes of education. As detailed in the national standards, emphasis is placed on educating students in core subjects such as reading, math and science, and this emphasis is underscored in the standardized testing programs developed by each state. Proponents of this approach say that students will receive a level of education that allows them to be competitive with students across the country and throughout the world. Students receiving such an education will develop higher order thinking skills that will allow them to be successful problem solvers in the real world. Proponents of the standards movement also argue that schools will be held accountable for the progress of all students, thus ensuring that no children fall through the cracks. For the proponents of national standards, student success may be measured by academic achievement scores on standardized tests. These scores may be compared across grade levels to determine the progress of an individual student and may be compared across schools to determine if schools are performing to standard. Local level opponents of pervasive government standards including parents and educators, decry the loss of invention in public schooling. They cite the lack of government attention paid to such programs as those for the arts, music and languages, and wonder if public schooling is becoming dangerously narrow. Additionally, opponents question a system that does not place a high level of concern on

what Clinchy describes as "the overall growth and development of students as thinking, feeling, caring human beings, as thoughtful and responsible future citizens of a possible more just and humane democratic society" (140). Clinchy, in illuminating these dilemmas notes that while both sides have strong feelings about the purposes of education, neither side has a real understanding of the purposes and intents of the other. In order to address these dilemmas, Clinchy believes that lines of communication must be opened and that people from both sides must be willing to engage in some tough dialogue that moves beyond bottom up/top down finger pointing.

In January of 2006, Education Weekly published its tenth annual accounting of education policy in America known as *Quality Counts*. While the review does not focus directly on NCLB, largely due the relative newness of the legislation, it does present ongoing concerns regarding standards based education and student progress. As part of the report, five individuals with long track records in public education were asked to comment on what they understand to be both success and ongoing struggles within public education. It is interesting to note that most if not all of the presenters have concerns identified in Clinchy's discussion of dilemmas in education. The question of who will control what is taught in local schools is implicit throughout the text. Also to be found are concerns about the purposes of education and what is valued in education, both part of historically ongoing conversations surrounding education.

In her analysis, Diane Ravitch, currently a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, and a former assistant U.S. Secretary of Education under George H.W. Bush,

addresses an ongoing and practical dilemma in American education: Who should have control of local education – the federal, state or local governments? To make her point, she describes the student progress rates from several states, making it clear that numerous standards and interpretations of these standards exist. She cites her concern that education is still too fragmented; that leaving the development of standards to the fifty individual states leads results that have little meaning when compared to those of other states. This creates difficulty for students, teachers, textbook creators and testing agencies. Ravitch asserts that the only way to address such disparity is to adopt national standards based on the NAEP and to effectively place more control in federal hands. Ravitch also addresses a second dilemma, which is interesting in light of her first concern. She describes certain situations where testing has turned education into training to bubble in answers, with non-tested subjects being paid short shrift by teachers preparing students to pass required tests. She emphasizes that education should be about teaching our children to "read, write, think, speak and participate in society" (4), but seems to be advocating for the very methods that are leading students away from an education that might provide those skills. Her position remains cloudy because she offers no practical thoughts as to how this desired type of education might be developed.

A second writer, Pascal Forgione, the Superintendent of the Austin Independent School District in Austin Texas, offered similar concerns about the need continue with standardization in such a way that it dictates actual curricula and instructional methods. For Forgione, such standardization in teaching methods will lead to greater gains in student performance and increases in test scores. While not addressing the call for

national standards, Forgione seems to be pushing for instructional methods developed outside of the classroom, with little input from individual practitioners. Although slightly different than the scenario offered by Ravitch, his concerns still speak to the difficulty in addressing who will control public education, as well as what it means to educate students.

Ronald Wolk, the founding editor of Education Week and Quality Counts, voiced some of the same concerns as Ravitch and Forgione, but his conclusions are quite different. In his view, standards-based reform has not lived up to its promise and rather than moving towards more standards, the government should be trying to reintroduce the flexibility and parsimony of NCLB that has been squeezed out of actual practice. In doing this, more control would be returned to local districts to create schools responsive to the needs of local students and their parents. This does not mean a retreat from standards, rather it means not letting standards or assessments be the primary drivers in education practice. These views, which speak to the ongoing broad dilemma of the purpose of education, are echoed somewhat by Marshall Smith, a former Deputy and Undersecretary of Education under former President Clinton and a former dean of the school of education at Stanford University. While he cites student gains evidenced by test scores as an important result of education policy, he offers the same criticisms about policy rigidity that make it unwieldy at the level of practice. For Smith, the current top-down flow of policy creation and implementation places the greatest levels of accountability at the level of practice. Those responsible for creating and funding policy may experience little in the way of personal accountability for the education of children,

a situation he says must change for education to move forward. Like Ravitch, he advocates broader education goals where students learn about such topics as community service, the arts and health education, goals that are also espoused in the writings of Clinchy. He believes that creation, service and teamwork should be emphasized and seems to believe that an over-reliance on standardized assessment tends to promote self-interest that works against a vision of democracy that promotes the common good. In order to do this, systems of accountability must be rethought to show progress in nontraditional ways. For Smith, nontraditional ways could include the formation of charter schools that offer more variety in instruction, the implementation of more experimental research in education settings and to improve the use of technology in education to provide more feedback to practitioners regarding student progress.

A final perspective is offered by James P. Comer, a professor of child psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine's Child Study Center. Along with other presenters, Comer raises the dilemma of the purpose of education. For him, the over-reliance of the standards movement on teaching subject matter neglects the development concerns of the individual child. In his view, teachers and other practitioners are unable to address what they know to be the important developmental needs of students due to rigid testing and teaching requirements. Comer emphasizes the complexity of functioning needed by the individual to be successful in life and is uncertain how such functioning will be developed in schools focused on standards. What is clear is that Comer is simply echoing concerns that have existed in some form throughout the history of education on America. However, given the persistent nature of these dilemmas, is it

possible to gain some clarity by approaching them through renewed dialogue? It is hoped that the following theoretical voices might offer some insight for approaching the divide between policy and practice.

Chapter Two: The Present Study and Methods of Analysis

TAKING TIME TO REFLECT: A CRITICAL HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

With NCLB firmly in place as the standard setter for education in America, why does it remain important to understand the concerns of those responsible for implementing the policy? In part, to address concerns expressed by Orfield (2003) regarding the possibility for unwanted and or unanticipated mutations of the policy and its intents as it is passed from the federal level down into the schools, it is important to understand if what is being valued by the practitioners is consistent with values expressed by those responsible for policy creation. Given that the policy is described in hundreds of pages of text, and that certain parts have undergone multiple mutations during the years since it was first written, it is easy to image that those responsible for translating the policy into practice face a daunting task. With the number of changes being made on a yearly basis, it may be important to consider if practitioners are being heard at the legislative level and are actively driving some of these changes. Gaining some insight into the perspectives of practitioners could serve to provide an understanding of any practitioner influences and could inform policy makers about how policies might better address the realities and concerns of individual school campuses.

To gain some clarity about how policy has the capacity to mutate as it trickles down from federal to local levels and how implementation may affect shifts in NCLB, it becomes necessary to understand how each of the identified groups including politicians, business leaders, community members, education researchers, and practitioners use

language when talking about education. It also becomes essential to understand the values and purposes that are embedded in the language used by these different groups in order to build bridges of dialogue between the levels. In *Ethics, the Social Sciences and Policy Analysis* (1983) edited by Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings, both of the Hastings Center, Martin Rein, a professor of social policy at MIT offers some insight into how researchers might approach a building a dialogue between the levels of policy, practice and research. In his initial argument, Rein questions the dependence of most individuals on the truth of facts, a dependence that typically does not involve looking beyond explicit information provided by a given body of facts. For Rein, it is important that we delve below this dependence and work towards gaining a greater understanding of the purposes and values that lie behind the facts. As an example, he quotes Hillary Putnam who applies this idea to the case of science: "truth is not the bottom line: truth gets its life from our criteria of rational acceptability, and these are what we must look at if we wish to discover the values which are really implicit in science" (pp. 145-146) (p. 89).

In seeking to establish dialogue outside of our level of experience, regardless of whether we are talking about science or education, we have to come to some understanding that the theories and methods that we adopt depend on our purposes, which in turn spring from personal values. In an attempt to provide some grounding for how such disparate groups such as policy makers and educators might approach dialogue, Rein explores the construct of the frame, which he describes as a "structure of thought, of evidence, of action, and hence, of interests and values" (p. 96) held at an individual or

group level. Based on this description, it is apparent that frame content may vary between individuals and groups. Because education policy creation and implementation reaches across many types of individual and group experiences, it is important to consider the need for "cross-frame discourse," which for Rein is more representative of how discourse unfolds across many levels of experience in the real world.

In an effort to provide some guidance for those seeking to engage in cross-frame discourse, Rein offers a brief description of what he calls four groups of frame awareness. The first group may have little or no awareness of the frame in which they operate. These individuals tend to accept what is expected by their discipline and work within its structure. They generally do not question the assumptions on which their practice is based. The second group is made up of people searching for a frame and possibly trying to introduce some meaning into life. The third group consists of analysts who are expert in critiquing the frames of others, but do not tend to question their own. The fourth group tends to question their own frames and express doubts because they do not see their own frames working. While these frames may seem somewhat artificial or limiting, they serve to remind us of the need to consider the reality of other perspectives imbued with strongly held values that may influence how discourse between groups may be initiated, an idea that will be explored more fully in a later discussion of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Some thoughts from the work of Helmut Dubiel in *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory* (1978/85) underscore the difficulty faced by individuals and groups in engaging in the deep level of reflection that may be necessary to advance education discourse beyond current reified positions. According to Dubiel,

> The life-world is defined in part by the fact that the cognitive systems of orientation within which we always move are taken for granted prereflectively as a kind of social reality. (p. 5)

This idea references the first frame as described by Rein, where social actors move within a given sphere, basically accepting the way that things are without question. Dubiel notes the difficulty of moving into a mode where the social actor may come to reflect on society and its cultural underpinnings, and cites the work of Michel Foucault as an example of the labor required to delve deeply into such reflections. In order to provide a practical example of how such frames might function, Rein's ideas will be included as part of the analysis of educator interviews that come later in this paper.

In a society where the need for action trumps the need for reflection, it is easy to see that finding the time and the will to reconsider a body of discourse about a topic such as education, could be a daunting proposition at best. Vaclav Havel, in *Living in Truth* (1986) advances the idea that given the amount of room provided by western democracies "for the genuine aims of life, the better the crisis is hidden from people and the more deeply do they become immersed in it."(116) For Havel such individuals become demoralized through their persistent participation in mass consumerist culture, forgetting their roots in the order of being and a sense of personal responsibility for anything beyond personal survival. In Havel's words, this majority of people living within western democracies have moved away from "living in the truth," and humanity suffers as a result of their apathy. Even groups marginalized from the dominant society, who have created some space within which they may engage in reflective thought, risk destruction as they pit their ideas against dominant concepts of political reality. Though

they strive to introduce ideas both as critical truths about certain societal structures and as possible visions for how such structures might function, these groups operate from a position that may hold little real political power or voice. (Dubiel, 1978/85) Historically, this has held true for education practitioners, who tend to be subject to the policies designed for them by legislators. Union groups provide some avenues for teachers to participate in the dialogue, but with their emphasis on pay, benefits and job security, it is questionable if unions provide an adequate forum for addressing dilemmas about the purposes of education. It seems obvious that if we seek to address these persistent dilemmas found in education rhetoric, the recognition and acceptance of the existence and validity of diverse viewpoints becomes crucial and the need to include all stakeholders in education discourse vital.

Part of taking time to reflect involves coming to some understanding of the development of discourse and the potential for language boundaries to exist between various disciplines or groups. Michel Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) seeks to offer some insight into how language seeks to define bodies of knowledge and the discourse surrounding these bodies. He advances this idea to describe how created bodies of knowledge and discourse allow for the inclusion or exclusion of speakers. He uses the term "archeology" to describe these bodies of knowledge, and in an interview published prior to his aforementioned book, Foucault set out to provide some explanation for the construct of an archeology:

> By archeology, I would like to designate not exactly a discipline but a domain of research, which would be of the following: in a society, different bodies of learning, philosophical ideas, everyday opinions, but also institutions, commercial practices and police activities, mores – all refer to a certain implicit knowledge [savoir] special to this society. This knowledge is profoundly different from the bodies of learning [des connaissances] that one can find in scientific books, philosophical theories, and religious justifications, but it [savoir] is what makes it

> possible at a given moment the appearance of a theory, and opinion, a practice. (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005, p. 261)

So in order to come to some deeper understanding of the practice of education, it becomes important to understand the contextual settings that contribute to the discourse on education as a construct and a practice, including those of federal, state and local governments, community stakeholders and institutions of education. Foucault takes some pains to clarify how such bodies of discourse are defined and offers a series of questions that allows one to come to some understanding of forms of enunciative modalities. For Foucault (1972), this involves determining who is speaking, who is qualified to do so, and what status or expertise is accorded the speaker. Also of some import is whether the speaker is presumed to present the truth in his or her speech. Foucault offers the example of the physician, claiming that a person holding such a level of expertise would likely function within a sharply defined and technical body of discourse. However, given the peculiar situation of education as a practice very much in the public eye, the issue of who can speak is cloudy. Such questions as advanced by Foucault become important in gaining some understanding of education discourse. Are certain voices, values and beliefs privileged over others? Does the language used invite or exclude various stakeholders? Beyond the qualifications of the individual speakers, it is also necessary to identify the institutions housing such speakers. Does a speaker from an elementary school receive the same deference that a speaker from a research institution, a governing body or a business receives? Foucault would argue that the different speakers would get different treatment and that an analysis of discourse should address such differences

including issues of power. Finally, Foucault says that the position of the speaker within the discourse must be considered. Is the speaker a contributor to dialogue? Is he or she an observer of events or do they choose to listen? Why do participants choose a particular mode of participation? All of these may affect how individuals contribute to a body of discourse. In applying these ideas to an analysis of NCLB, transcripts of hearings will be analyzed with the above questions in mind. And in order to bring in the voices that are conspicuously absent from the discussion (Orfield, 2003), interviews will be done with individuals working as practitioners in education.

So why does it become important to account for the perspectives of practitioners in education discourse? Rein (1983) looks to Habermas for a response. He cites Habermas's discussion of the three functions of the critical task in *Theory and Practice* (1976) in order to provide clarity to this question. For Habermas, the formation and extension of critical theorems, the application and testing of theorems, and the selection of appropriate action strategies are all important. However, as emphasized by Rein, "theory standing by itself can never justify political action" (102). For Rein, the importance of Habermas lies in his attempt to integrate the knowing and acting person, which in turn is critical for initiating a level of self-reflection in individuals that may lead to political consensus. Rein admits this line of could be more fleshed out, but acknowledges the importance of considering the positions of theory, policy creation and practice in opening avenues of dialogue. For the persons responsible for implementing NCLB, it is critical to understand how practitioners see the policy and how they are working to sustain its aims if the good in the policy is to find purchase, a concern voiced

by Orfield (2003). Given the ideas put forth by Rein and Foucault, it is likely that some variation in individual and group perspectives based on personally held values and purposes for education exists, and acknowledging these variations should influence how bridging a divide in dialogue between policy makers and practitioners is accomplished.

Some ideas about how such communication may be forged, despite the possibilities for variations on individual and group perspectives can be found in the work of Jürgen Habermas. As discussed in *Re-envisioning Psychology* (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1999), Habermas developed a theory of communication known as communicative action. For Habermas, such communication is less about technique-driven instrumental activity, and more about people coming to understanding within "shared cultural, ethical, aesthetic or religious meanings." (184) Through the course of a given discussion, individuals may come to a consensus through the recognition of the better argument. With an emphasis placed faith in the ability of the individual to see beyond the omnipresence of instrumental activity in American society and to almost instinctually move towards deeper moral concerns in discourse, Richardson, Fowers and Guignon (1999) raise some valid concerns about Habermas's proposition. They question whether humans can reach "agreement about matters that are at least partly evaluative or moral without reverting to dogmatism and arbitrary authority" (185). In response to these concerns, Habermas offers the *Ideal Speech Situation*, which is based in what he describes as the natural tendency of humans to be social actors:

> Inherently, humans seek a consensus about issues of rightness or justice through discourse that involves such things as full accountability to one another for the quality of our reasoning, arguing as many different points of view as possible in

> the search for a valid consensus, and the exclusion of "all possible motives except that of cooperative search for truth" (1973, p.18). (Richardson, Fowers, Guignon, 1999, p.186)

It is interesting to note that Habermas makes no claim that to adhere to such a method leads to a quick, easy resolution of dilemmas faced by individuals on a daily basis. In fact, the above statement seems to indicate a need for perseverance, patience and respect when engaging others in discourse, qualities that may be scarce in day-to-day negotiations in real world situations. That the opportunity to engage in dialogue involving a particular policy may be time or funding limited underscores the difficulty that both policy makers and practitioners face in trying to move a given discourse through imbedded dilemmas. However, given the disconnect between policy makers and practitioners regarding pervasive dilemmas in education, putting time in to work towards consensus during the front end of policy development could have the effect of creating a policy that enjoys more faithful implementation.

In addition to acknowledging the existence of various perspectives to be found in discourse bodies concerning education and coming to terms with the potential difficulty of bringing these individual and group perspectives to some sort of consensus, it becomes important to understand some of the some basic societal constructs that may impact dialogue. As mentioned earlier in Richardson, Fowers and Guignon (1999), Habermas cites the pervasiveness of instrumental reason in modern society as a barrier to dialogue conducted at a deeper, moral level. In explaining how such reasoning has come to dominate society, Habermas describes a society that has come to confuse the terms of techne and praxis. By placing techne, which emphasizes the application of techniques and instrumental reasoning to life processes, over praxis, which emphasizes concern for moral and cultural issues, society is led away from addressing social dilemmas with any

real depth. In the end, deeper questions about the meanings imbedded in social institutions such as education go unexamined in the push to create efficient, generalizable, easily monitored and measured techniques. Even more sobering is the idea that a reliance on instrumental reasoning and technique dictates the language used in a particular discussion, which in turn defines the questions that may be entertained within such a discussion. (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1999) Groups who seek to introduce moral or philosophical concerns to the discourse could effectively be shut out according to Foucault. Habermas is not alone in his concerns. In his book, *Practice and the Human Sciences* (2004), Donald Polkinghorne seeks to provide support for the idea that within the professions of care, including teaching, nursing and therapy, there is a need to address current trends in treatment that have led practitioners away from their own voices and judgments through what he describes as the "technification of society." This terminology originates to some extent from the works of those such as French philosopher, Jacques Ellul, who wrote at length in *The Technological Society* (1964) in an attempt to describe what he saw as the increasing reliance of modern society on technology. It must be clarified that technology here does not refer to an increase in the use of computers and other high-tech devices, but rather a reliance on mechanized, prescribed ways of acting. Ellul even expands this definition somewhat to include science-driven actions that permeate society and are so pervasive they are in his words "no longer external to man and have become his very substance" (p. 6).

It is possible that such as reliance on technique, demonstrated by the transcripts and texts of NCLB, has served to increase the difficulty of establishing a dialogue between politician, business leaders and teachers. For teachers working within the context of NCLB, this technification includes a reliance on science-based instructional

techniques and assessments mandated at the federal and state levels of government and divorced from the day-to-day practice of teaching. For Ellul the danger in such technification of education goes beyond a breakdown in communication between vested parties; it is rather more foreboding in tone:

> Thus technique becomes all the more necessary. It makes men happy in a milieu which normally would have made them unhappy, if they had not been worked on, molded, and formed for just that milieu. What looks like the apex of humanism is in fact the pinnacle of human submission: children are educated to become precisely what society expects of them. They must have social consciences that allow them to strive for the same ends that society sets for itself. (348)

Where those who promote the use of technique in education see it as a way to improve the condition of all children, Ellul fears that such standardization runs the risk of eradicating creativity from the experience of learning and essentially turns the process into government-sponsored social engineering.

Polkinghorne is more cautious in his critique of the reliance on technique and is careful to point out that focusing solely on either judgment-based practice or technically-based practice is an inadequate approach to meeting the needs of students, patients or clients. However, he holds some of Ellul's fears regarding the over-reliance America has on technique and warns that in a technique-driven society, practitioner judgment may not be valued as a viable source of information in determining how children may be taught.

In seeking gain some clarity about an inquiry into practice, Polkinghorne poses two questions: "What goal is being sought and what is being done to accomplish that goal?" (7). For Polkinghorne, goals derived from practice may involve serving the self, serving individuals and serving larger community groups. It is possible that practitioner

emphasis on serving individuals and smaller intimate groups has the capacity to create a divide between teachers and policy makers who created NCLB to address the needs of a nation's students. While the larger goal of encouraging student success would likely be a common ideal between the groups, it is equally as likely that the two groups have different beliefs about how this might best be accomplished. So what is being done to achieve such a goal might look, for politicians, like the standardized programs of instruction, assessment and reporting being established by each state, while for a teacher, it might look like an individualized study plan for each of his or her students, which is consistent with traditional approaches to care that emphasize individual differences, needs and histories.

Despite what appears to be an overwhelming number of barriers that make creating and sustaining open dialogue between policy makers and practitioners difficult at best, Richardson, Fowers and Guignon (1998) offer some possible approaches based on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer in the discipline of hermeneutics. Similar to the ideas presented by Habermas in his development of the Ideal Speech Situation, Gadamer acknowledges a shared sense of understanding that people harbor based on their enculturation into a given society and their use of a common language. For Gadamer, these commonalities allow for individuals to relate to each other in the face of myriad possibilities for misunderstanding. In accepting the existence of these commonalities, Gadamer is making an argument for the importance of considering humans in context and that any self understanding comes from our shared experiences as members of families, societies or states. In turn, these levels of understanding impact how we approach others

in communication. Unlike Habermas, Gadamer does not base his argument on a reliance of reason, because for him, such reason may only be constructed within a concrete historical context, and does not exist independently in any absolute sense. Because we exist within this historical context, where reason is tied to historical context, we must also recognize ourselves a creatures of the prejudicial thinking that is captured within a particular context. Engaging in self-critique of personal bias becomes important to opening one's self up to the perspectives of others. It is clear that this is not an easy proposition – Rein's frame categories give some indication of how may people exist in different levels of awareness. However, Gadamer does not see these differences as problematic, insisting, in fact, that the ongoing need for self-reflection and assessment of personal biases is part of human existence. When applied to a particular dialogue, reaching understanding becomes less about achieving some final answer, and more about a give and take, where the ideas of each participant have the opportunity to be shaped by the interaction with others. In fact, for Gadamer, every time we approach a text or body of discourse we come to it from a new position, however subtle the changes in perspective may be. Although people come to a dialogue from many perspectives, Gadamer feels that these perspectives may be channeled into three different forms of I-Thou relations as demonstrations of how people seek to gain levels of understanding. The first, basically involves the subject seeing the other as a case or type. The second way of relating involves the subject who seeks to know the other in some deep, psychological way, that may be motivated by needs to control of dominate. The third way constitutes, in the views of Richardson, Fowers and Guingon (1998), a more authentic form of relating. In approaching the other, the individual opens himself up to

the truth of what the other is saying in an attempt to co-construct a truth about a particular topic. The individual also acknowledges that his assumptions may be incorrect, and he must be open to being changed by what the other has to say. Deborah Kerdeman (1998) writing on the work of Gadamer, echoes this sentiment with the idea that it is when people are truly engaged with other people and in living that their deepest biases become apparent and they are open to an inspection of their individually held levels of understanding. At times, the individual might feel at home, that he or she belongs in a certain context, and at other times, he or she might feel estranged or disoriented; however, for Gadamer, both conditions are very much a part of natural human experience and need be acknowledged as such. Hermeneutics works within this idea that the tension between the familiar and strange should not be covered up, but should be actively explored, a belief that could be applied to an exploration of the dialogic potential between policy makers and practitioners.

ASSESSING LEGISLATIVE PERSPECTIVES

In an attempt to come to some level of understanding regarding the creation of NCLB and its impact on practice, it becomes important to consider data from a variety of sources. Since the policy was created by people with the intent that it directly impacts the lives of other people, considering the policy as a social interaction is key to understanding experiences of affected groups at all levels of creation and implementation. In qualitative research, this may involve, along with interviews of practitioners, who historically have been left out of education policy discussions, data about the individuals

who contributed to the creation of the policy and textual data from the actual policy. Atkinson and Delamont (2005) speak for the need to include types of data that reflect forms of social and cultural action. They see foundational work in qualitative research as crucial toward gaining some understanding about how "members of society accomplish joint activity through language and other practical activities as well as how they align their activities through shared cultural resources" (p. 822). In order to achieve such a level of understanding and to avoid what they criticize as analytical fragmentation, Atkinson and Delamont describe types of data beyond the interview that may be included in qualitative work.

In the case of data gathered from the individuals involved in creation of NCLB, several forms are available for perusal. Probably the one of the earliest sources is President Bush's proposal for NCLB (2001). Basically acting as an outline for the final policy, this proposal provides the acting government with talking points necessary for selling its ideas about education to Congress and the general public, and was utilized by then Education Secretary Paige when NCLB was initially presented to congressional members. Springing from this initial proposal are a series of transcribed accounts of House and Senate hearings, where various stakeholders and special interest groups present concerns about education to congressional committee members, and where committee members seek to gain a clearer picture about the state of education in America. Atkinson and Delamont describe this type of data as discourse or spoken action data, and the methods used to analyze such data as discourse or conversation analysis. It is their belief that such analysis needs to remain connected to the organizational and

social context from which the spoken actions arise if is to have cohesive meaning. Although they provide a caveat against analytic methods that lead to fragmented findings and espouse methods that allow for a relational understanding of the different types of data, they offer little regarding methods a researcher might employ in analyzing written pieces.

May (2001) provides some guidance for approaching text as part of document research. Of primary importance is deciding how the document is to be used – for instance, is it part of a larger identified context or will it be viewed as some isolated ahistorical artifact? In the case of NCLB, the proposal, the policy transcripts and the text of the law itself may be answerable to this concern. For the purposes of this paper, keeping the work of Atkinson and Delamont (2005) in mind, these particular documents will be considered as part of an ongoing historical discourse surrounding education, and will be held as evidence of social actions committed by various contributors to the larger education discourse. According to May, attention to the historical placement of a document may give us the tools to explore how contemporary issues or dilemmas have emerged. In order to arrive at this level of understanding, there are several concerns that must be addressed when approaching a document. Some initial concerns involve the actual writing contained in each text. May asks the researcher to consider errors or inconsistencies in the text. He also asks if more than one version of the document exists so that they might be compared and contrasted. Additionally, he calls for the researcher to be aware that inconsistencies may exist between related documents. Another source of concern revolves around the credibility of the document – basically, is the document

undistorted and sincere? (Scott, 1990) Is the document representative of a particular type of document? Finally, what is the meaning of the document, which for the purposes of this study is embedded in social and historical context?

In terms of a concise methodology, one may look to the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) for insight. In many ways, the transcripts of the congressional hearings regarding NCLB are like structured group interviews. There is a prescribed order the group must follow in order for each member to speak, and speakers are often time-limited. Speakers may be engaged by questioning, but such questioning is also time-limited. Although speakers may offer widely differing views about what they desire for education, education tends to remain a central focus of all speech. Since qualitative interviews are typically analyzed in text form, it is not too much of a stretch to apply the methods to the congressional transcripts. In approaching the data, Strauss and Corbin emphasize the importance of questioning, with the who, what, when, where and why questions acting to provide the researcher with a base from which to gain some deeper understanding of what the text is saying. Although the data may not provide answers to all of the questions, it provides some direction for the researcher to explore during subsequent readings. Strauss and Corbin also advocate for close reading methods where the researcher may consider the meaning of individual words or phrases in the text. In performing such close reading, the cultural meaning of such words or phrases could be considered along with specific contextual meanings and how such meaning might vary among contributors to education discourse. Gaining a deeper understanding of the proposals, transcripts and NCLB text through such close reading may be achieved in the

following way. First, open coding takes place. This involves identifying basic concepts, terms or categories in the text. Next, axial coding involves seeking relationships between various concepts or categories in the text. In this level of coding, both structure and process are explored. These categories seek to provide understanding about how or why certain events occur and how people act and interact. Selective coding allows for integrating categories and creating a storyline from these integrated categories. Such a storyline may help the researcher to understand persistent themes or dilemmas in a field such as education, and may provide guidance in applying theory to and developing theory from text. Finally, coding for process allows for a deeper understanding of the text as situated in larger events over time and space and allows us to look at NCLB as part of a larger ongoing process of education.

ASSESSING INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

While the voices of policy makers are available in a very public sense and the actual NCLB text part of public record, the voices of practitioners have relatively few outlets that provide similar access to public attention. From the historical review, it is apparent that the voices of practitioners are largely absent from discussions outside of the schoolhouse regarding the creation of education policy and its influence on practice. With the advent of education research in America, practitioners ran the risk of being unheard due to the perception by some university professors that knowledge derived from interviews and observations of practitioners was somehow less valid than that gathered in scientific study designed and conducted within the halls of the university. And based on

analysis of persons invited to testify on behalf of education interests during the writing of *A Nation at Risk* and during the hearings for NCLB, the voices of those working at the campus level are largely absent. Speakers appear to be drawn largely from industry representatives and heads of organizations addressing special interests related to education. Campus representation tends to come in the form of addresses from leaders of the National Education Association (NEA) or from superintendents of large school districts, both of which are arguably divorced from the day to day issues of policy implementation on a typical campus. Formal communication regarding policy implementation tends to be in the form of top-down directives, with little opportunity for teachers and other campus-level practitioners to engage in true dialogue with policy makers at federal and state levels. Such formal lines of communication include memorandums, handbooks and meeting agendas, and can offer some perspective as to how information is passed on to teachers (Duemer & Mendez-Morse, 2002). According to these researchers, there is a relative lack of information on how practitioners engage in dialogue about policy implementation due to the informal nature of much of this dialogue. Such informal lines of communication include lunchroom chats, conversations during team meetings and informal emails to colleagues. Along with what are physical breaks in communication between the various groups invested in the implementation of NCLB, at issue is the possibility for breaks in communication due to the difference in use of language and attending value systems employed by policy makers, researchers and practitioners (Foucault, 1972). Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) cite a body of research that calls for the use of qualitative interviewing methods to tease out informal lines of communication in an effort to better understand how practitioners seek to

implement policy. March and Olsen (1979) emphasize the need to consider the human factor in implementation and make clear that "personal values and agendas that are not on the surface evident to an investigator often influence decisions" (p. 3).

It is likely that differences in the use of language and held values may contribute to what Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) term "policy mutation." Policy mutation is the change that occurs as policy moves from the original form crafted by legislators to what is actually carried out at the campus level. According to Sergiovanni (1984), thoughts, assumptions and preconceptions about a policy such as NCLB may be influenced in the individual by values, preferences, prejudices and motives, making consistent implementation a challenge. Other factors that contribute to this mutation include the passage of the policy through various levels of education hierarchy. Policy may receive some revisions as it moves from the state to the local district and to the individual campus, creating further opportunity for breaks in dialogue due to a lack of understanding about the overall intents of the policy or willful changes made to subvert undesired aspects of the policy. Given the concerns of The Civil Rights Project (2003) related to NCLB and the contributions of those expected to implement the policy, it seems crucial to make inroads into understanding how practitioners view the policy, how it intersects with their values about education and how they have chosen to carry out its mandates. Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) reiterate these concerns stating that ultimately, individuals are responsible for policy implementation and it behooves researchers and policy makers to gain a better understanding of how individuals think

about a particular policy and how these thoughts are translated into actions including engaging in dialogue about the policy with others.

Thomas Schwandt, in his book, *Evaluation Practice Reconsidered* (2002), offers some perspectives evaluators might consider when approaching work with practitioners. Schwandt centers his thinking on Aristotelian notions of praxis and phronesis when approaching evaluation of practice. As defined by Schwandt, praxis is exemplified by socially embedded action, while phronesis refers to "practical competence or practical wisdom that is the kind of knowledge required for personal and social action, especially in its ethical and political aspects" (p. 2). As applied to the establishment of dialogue between policy makers and practitioners, Schwandt claims that when practitioners turn solely to outside experts to determine value in education, they run the risk of losing the ability to think critically about their own values concerning education and practice. To address this risk, Schwandt proposes approaching the establishment of dialogue from a humanistic or hermeneutic perspective. To do so involves approaching practitioners as individuals actively engaged in life, with all of its ambiguities. Such an approach carries with it an understanding that knowledge can be self-transformative; that it has moral and political dimensions. With this in mind, researchers, practitioners and policy makers seeking to create avenues of dialogue could hope to arrive at some level of mutual understanding, similar in some respects to ideas presented by Habermas and described in the earlier theoretical section. Finally, the recognition that participants from all levels of administration have something to contribute to the development of a body of practical wisdom about a particular topic is essential in building respect between participants in a

dialogue. These ideas are in opposition to forms of evaluation that put the individual in the role of a subject rather than a participant. They also oppose research performed for the sake of acquiring knowledge in order to improve, control or manage society; in effect, for Schwandt, the acquisition of knowledge serves an educative function among participants in a dialogue.

Schwandt advances his position further to call for a "recapturing of moral discourse" in research and evaluation. For him, this involves "relocating decisions about the moral worth of human actions in the lived experience of those actors making those decisions" (p. 55). Situated within policy creation and implementation, this invites those working within these realms to consider deeper meaning for their actions, beyond the creation and purveyance of technique. For the researcher, it becomes critical to include the voices of relevant stakeholders in the discussion in order to gain a broader understanding of concerns regarding NCLB implementation. Schwandt cites the works of Martin Buber and Hans-Georg Gademer in support of these ideas, noting that underlying a social construct such as NCLB, there always exists the human relationship and that we must recognize these relationships that in effect make us human in order gain some understanding of self and other. To expose one's self to the view of another opens one up to new ideas, and the possibility of self-transformation. It stands to reason, that seeking to build this type of communication, where the participants are truly open to what each other might say could foster new ways of understanding how and why we educate children in our country.

In order to explore concerns about policy implementation and surrounding dialogue, I conducted interviews of teachers and administrators working at the campus level to actively implement NCLB policy mandates. The site from which I drew subjects is an elementary school that is part of a large, urban school district located in the southwestern United States. Since I work as a school counselor on this campus, I am in a unique position to access the perspectives of a number of educators. This role affords me a high level of trust among the educators within the target campus. More information on my role as an educator can be found in my Interviewer as a Participant Statement in Appendix B. In the past three years I have worked alongside these educators to help build our learning community and improve dialogue between the members of our campus team. Based on my practical experience, I believe that this school exemplifies most of the targeted concerns of NCLB: it is a Title I school, with close to 90% of its 750 students classified as economically disadvantaged. It has a large Hispanic minority population served by programs designed to address the needs of students limited in English proficiency. The school is much like other schools with similar demographics in that it is consistently rated as acceptable under state assessment standards. To address these ratings, instructional methods are under constant scrutiny in an effort to raise student achievement to recognized or exemplary levels on state standardized tests. This school also houses several special education units; one for students needing early childhood support to enhance school readiness, and two for students with more severe disabilities who require life skills training. The school employs a number of instructional coaches and reading specialists who are charged with improving literacy levels in struggling students and helping teachers with small group

tutoring, put in place to remedy poor academic skills in state mandated testing areas. Based on these demographics, it is apparent that there are many individuals on the campus, from Early Childhood through fifth grade, who are directly responsible for the implementation of NCLB mandates both as part of instruction and assessment.

More directly related to the purposes of this study is the work that has been done on this campus by administrators, teachers and support staff to create open lines of communication between the different groups working on this large campus. Emphasis is placed on building learning communities both with colleagues and with students and their families. Community building is accomplished through weekly grade level team meetings where teams set goal for their students, academic support team and administrative team meetings that invite input from all grade levels, community circles in the classrooms and frequent informal meetings with parents conducted in English and Spanish. Staff members are encouraged to engage in dialogue with each other about how to educate students and are encouraged to take time to watch fellow teachers in action to obtain new ideas about instruction. Within its particular district, this school is seen as an innovator in developing learning communities, and its staff members are often invited to present their models for building community at district and state levels. Because there are so many opportunities for dialogue, this school seems to be bridging the gap between formal, generally top-down communication, and informal communication that happens in casual conversation, and may offer researchers more insight into how policy is being understood and implemented. It provides insight into how dialogue might expand from the campus level to include other contributors to education thought and practice. Persons

interviewed include classroom teachers, a bilingual teacher, a special education teacher, instructional coaches, a reading specialist and campus administrators. In order to get a deeper picture of how the campus is operating under No Child Left Behind three administrators and six teachers were interviewed. Given that No Child Left Behind has been in place for about six years, staff members who have seven or more years of experience would be selected in order to provide insight into how education has been affected by the policy. In this study most respondents had more than twenty years of experience. In addition to the dialogue building skills that are encouraged in campus members, individuals who have accepted leadership roles were chosen, as they typically have the most opportunity to engage in dialogue at a variety of levels both on- and off-campus. Leadership roles held by these educators include those of grade level team leader, instructional chair, National Board Certified Teacher, Master Reading Teacher, teacher of the year or a campus coordinator for various projects. Interviews were structured through the use of interview protocols. The initial set of interview questions (Appendix A) addressed educator perceptions of the purposes of education. These views were then contrasted with what these educators believed to be the views held by the public, including legislators. The respondents were then asked to consider what they have seen to be the effects of NCLB on practice. They were also questioned about the resources politicians draw from when making education law. Finally, interviewees were asked to relate opportunities for education dialogue both on- and off-campus. It was hoped that this information might illuminate avenues for expanding dialogue regarding NCLB. Responses were then clarified or elaborated on based on further questioning from the interviewer (May, 2001). An interview protocol (Appendix A) developed from the

work of Duemer and Mendez-Morse (2002) detailing nine areas of potential investigation was used to provide structure and consistency to interviews. As detailed in earlier in this section, interviews were analyzed using coding methods prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Responses were then analyzed for practitioner perspectives about the purposes and intents of NCLB, personal and institutional values related to policy implementation and forms of dialogue adopted by practitioners to address implementation concerns. These interview responses were held in comparison to responses given by politicians, business leaders and heads of education organizations during the creation of NCLB in an attempt to illuminate avenues for the expansion of dialogue between the representative groups.

Chapter Three: Analyses of Congressional Transcripts and No Child Left Behind

THE INITIAL PROPOSAL FOR NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

In the presentation of the Bush Administration's blueprint for No Child Left Behind, the aim of the legislation is made clear on the title page of the document, with the words, "The federal role in education is not to serve the system. It is to serve the children" (NCLB proposal, 2000). In addition to providing an overview of additions to be made to existing education titles, in this document the administration sets forth four concepts to give guidance to those responsible for crafting legislation. The first, an increase in accountability for student performance, has received the most attention from researchers and the popular press generally as a result of the incorporation of high stakes testing into the accountability systems of all states. The language of the proposal is blunt; improvements in student achievement will be rewarded and failure will be sanctioned, with schools held directly accountable for student learning. And important to the purposes of this paper, the language creates a very real power differential between federal administration and practitioners that could impact the ability of practitioners to contribute to dialogue surrounding the policy. The proposal also gives some indication of expectations by the administration for instructional practice. Federal money would be devoted to funding instructional methods that had been proven to be successful through the use of what would later be termed, in the text of The Strategic Plan (2001), science-based methods. Again, this language serves to create potential obstacles to dialogue by defining what methods will be given consideration and funding. By the insistence of

entertaining only science-based methodologies, the government may in effect define what constitutes knowledge, teaching and learning. It is unclear how instructional knowledge gained through practice could receive the same consideration given the need for science-based data. O. L. Davis (2003) has questioned what he sees as a narrowing of the dialogue surrounding education by the insistence on such measures and fears that alternative perspectives on educating children will be devalued. A third goal of the proposal is to reduce the amount of bureaucracy needed to administer federal programs and to give states and local districts more flexibility in how funds could be spent. Given the size of the document and its perplexing vagueness in parts, the opposite has been a reality for most school districts. The touted flexibility may leave schools with little concrete direction over how to proceed on matters of local governance and these districts are understandably concerned that a misinterpretation could lead to poor reports and sanctions. This has the capacity to contribute to a lack of trust between local and state school boards and federal administration. And given the concerns over accountability, schools are finding that they have little real flexibility in how money is appropriated. So what looks like an opportunity for schools to have more voice in how they educate children is really more responsibility for following often unclear regulations. A final goal of the proposal is to give parents more power through the use of school report cards and the expansion of parent choice in removing students from low performing schools. While this proposal does seem to invite more government oversight, it also serves to bring parents into the dialogue regarding public education, and seeks to educate parents about what schools are doing to educate children. Research by Romo and Falbo (1996) into parent beliefs and expectations about the schooling of their children indicate a strong

need for more information to be provided to parents, particularly students who have been identified as one of the target groups of NCLB, if these students are to receive the most from public schools. These guiding concepts for NCLB were then expanded into components that would become the heart of the policy.

The reform agenda then outlines several key components that would become part of the finished project that is NCLB. Of primary importance is closing the achievement gap (NCLB proposal, 2000) by creating a system of accountability and high standards for all students. Schools would be held accountable for student progress through student scores on annual math and reading tests, along with sample comparisons for 4th and 8th grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As mentioned in the earlier section, schools failing to make adequate progress for identified student groups may face corrective actions that could include the entire school being reconstituted, and ultimately the loss of students. Literacy would be a top priority for NCLB, with the establishment of Reading First initiatives to fund primary instruction. Head Start would also benefit from an influx of funds designed to encourage early instruction in reading. Along with the first two components, the new law should seek to reduce levels of bureaucracy by combining overlapping state and local grant programs. It would also provide some flexibility to local districts regarding the appropriation of Title I funds and funding for technology. States and local districts agreeing to become part of a government charter would receive some oversight relief upon submitting a five-year performance agreement to the Secretary of Education. As made clear in the orienting concepts of the blueprint, success in student progress would be rewarded and failure

would be sanctioned. Schools would be eligible for performance-based financial rewards, but failure could be met by the loss of federal money.

In addition to answering to federal authorities, school districts would also be required to answer to parents with respect to student progress and would support parents in efforts to make informed choices about schooling. At the state level, more money would be approved for charter schools in order to give parents more choice. Research on the effects of school choice would be funded by the federal government in order to track the effectiveness of the school choice movement. In another move designed to boost the quality of education on schools, the proposal calls for the training and utilization of quality teachers in all classrooms. This has proved to be a sticking point in the final policy, due to a lack of agreement regarding what makes a quality teacher. Instructionally, schools would be required to beef up math and science instruction and to do so in partnership with universities so that students would be better prepared for post-secondary academics. A final aim involved increasing the overall safety of schools by providing funding for drug-free programs and character education. The proposal also sought to provide means by which students attending unsafe schools could request transfers to safer learning environments. All of these proposals underscored a primary aim of the blueprint which was to create a piece of legislation that could be put in place and monitored by the federal government to ensure that all children, disadvantaged and otherwise achieved to the highest potential.

In order to gain some understanding of how discourse regarding the blueprint, the reauthorization of existing policy and the addition of new requirements progressed over

the course of congressional hearings for NCLB, I used close reading procedures as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and document analysis procedures taken from May (2001). Reports from the hearings contained two types of information: transcriptions of the words of all hearings speakers and written statements from each invited speaker that were made part of hearing records. The written statements provided by invited speakers were analyzed as documents, with an emphasis on the meaning contained in these documents, including intended meanings of the writer, received meanings by the reader and content meanings which may vary according to discourse boundaries of a particular group (Scott, 1990) (in May, 2001). Specifically, questions that might be explored are:

> What is the relationship of a text's parts to each other? What is the relationship of the text to other texts? What is the relationship of the text to those who participated in constructing it? What is the relationship of the text to realities conceived of as lying outside of it? What empirical patterns are evident in these intra- and intertextual relations and what do these indicate about the meaning? (Ericson et al, 1991) (48)

Hearing transcriptions were treated as archival interview transcriptions. Three types of questions, as outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1998), were considered in approaching the interviews: 1. sensitizing questions that focus on the identified problems, actors involved, meanings and definitions for the actors, and consequences of actions, 2. theoretical questions that seek to illuminate connections between various concepts found within the transcripts and to identify larger structural issues at play within the context of the interviews, and 3. practical questions that help to identify and develop evolving theory. In the case of these hearing transcripts such practical concerns might involve an exploration of the use of language, how it contributes to creating bodies of discourse

about education and how this discourse interacts with the discourse of the education practitioner in matters of policy. The following section makes use of these methods to analyze a series of congressional hearings for NCLB.

THE PROPOSAL GOES BEFORE CONGRESS

The initial blueprint proposals were sent to Congress, which then began the onerous task of integrating the desired additions to existing policy, most of which originated with the ESEA of 1965. Hearings were conducted regarding each of the ten titles of the document, and speakers representing various public and private interests were invited to participate in providing information for lawmakers. In one of initial hearings held on February 15, 2001, and titled President Bush's Education Proposals, members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions discussed in broad terms the components of the President's proposal and asked for clarification from the Education Secretary Rod Paige. It is clear from transcripts of the dialogue that for the most part, there was strong bipartisan agreement regarding the need for education reform along the lines of NCLB. Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut went so far as to praise the slogan of "leave no child behind" as one that would rally much needed support (22) when specific proposals were presented for vote. Support for increasing levels of literacy, especially for younger students and those with learning disabilities received strong vocal support. But by and large, most discussion focused on funding for the mandate and how methods of funding would interact with existing funding, programs and similarly expansive mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Several Senators expressed concerns that NCLB would require much more funding than what was being proposed to accomplish the development of systems of

accountability, remediation and reporting called for in the mandate. That they had seen similar difficulties with states attempting to meet the requirements of IDEA with a similar lack of funds led some committee members to focus attention on how funding would happen. The most heated exchange resulted from remarks by Senator Paul Wellstone (Minnesota), who expressed indignation that if one questioned what he perceived as an over-reliance on testing, one was attacked as "lowering expectations because some kids cannot learn" (33). It is important to note that this perception of being attacked by the Education Department is consistent with the identification of barriers to dialogue identified by the Civil Rights Project (2004). Secretary Paige responded that while the administration was willing to negotiate some State flexibility in measuring student progress, it was also adamant about testing and measurement as important means for making such progress more transparent. At this point in the discussion, possibly in an attempt to take some of the sting from the remarks by Senator Wellstone, Secretary Paige was praised by several committee members for his success in leading Houston, Texas schools to higher levels of academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores. Since Texas was in many ways the model for Bush's accountability plan, it is unsurprising that such achievement was praised at the time. However, since NCLB was signed into law, researchers have had time to revisit the methods and results for academic growth in Texas, and some (The Texas Miracle) (Amrein & Berliner) have called into question the results. Understandably, this raises questions about how much is truly transparent in assessment, as well as what the results of such assessments actually mean in terms of student learning.

At this time, committee members did not have this information available, and lacked the means to ask some harder questions about accountability measures. As such,

for the most part, dialogue remained mostly at the surface level self-congratulation and polite language designed with all likelihood to build working relationships that would last for the long haul of integrating new education agendas into existing law. No member asked deeper questions about how such a law would impact the meanings of teaching, knowledge and learning, and it would be interesting to see if such reticence is consistent in committee discussion on topics other than education. For the most part money seemed to be the most highly valued topic given the amount of time spent addressing it, but to be fair, the discussion did indicate that the members of the committee seemed to value implicitly the idea that all children should be given the opportunity and resources to advance educationally. However, what such advancement meant was left vague. Only one member, Senator Tom Harkin (Iowa) mentioned that he had spoken to teachers about their concerns for education, and the input related more to practical concerns about class size and funding than deeper questions about the meaning of education. In general, the voices of teachers were conspicuously absent. But as more meetings were held, various voices came to be added to the discussion.

Several weeks after the Senate meeting, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce held its own initial hearing ("Leave No Child Behind", March 7, 2001) with Education Secretary Rod Paige so that members could voice initial concerns and questions pertaining to the President's proposal. As in the Senate hearing, much of the discussion centered on the issue of funding. Of primary concern was that efforts to streamline funding for individual education programs would result in a loss of monies from established programs. In particular, House members were concerned that a push to use Title I monies to fund large parts of NCLB remediation would result in programs already operating under Title I not having the committed funding to operate successfully.

Secretary Paige replied that it was not the intent of the Administration to take away money from successful programs, but he underlined the fact that such programs must be able to demonstrate their effectiveness through scientifically sound methods of gathering data in order to continue to receive funds.

In a related topic, House members also expressed concerns related to funding and oversight. Paige tried to assure members that states would be responsible for developing systems of accountability, but members expressed some wariness in response to the stated position of the proposal where the government would act as an administrator of sanctions against States and local education agencies failing to meet required standards of performance. Although the government would also offer rewards for advancements, the language for what such rewards would look like was vague in comparison to promises of loss of funding and school reconstitution for failures. The questions expressed by the House members served to underscore a sense of confusion about what the federal role in education would be and gave some indication of a lack of trust regarding the ability of the government to support states in their efforts to develop systems of accountability as required by the mandate. House member Peter Hoekstra from Michigan cited recent irregularities in spending and accounting stemming from the Department of Education, and called for Secretary Paige to ensure his own house was in order before pushing for a more visible federal presence in education. In an effort to reassure committee members, Paige declared that much of what was being expected from States was already in the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA, and that in his estimation, close to half of all states were already working on comprehensive assessment programs on par with government expectations.

Although funding issues, particularly as funding for new measures would coexist with previous Title I funding initiatives, the committee discussion did voice other concerns. Some time was spent talking about recruiting qualified individuals to teaching. Susan Davis (California) sought ideas for getting highly qualified teachers in the difficult schools that need them the most. Like some Senate members, she also wanted some assurance about maintaining smaller class sizes for teachers. Secretary Paige gave some general remarks about onerous certification programs as being barriers to getting people from corporate or armed services sectors into education, but Ms. Davis challenged his assertions with the idea that a bigger barrier might be a lack of competitive salaries. She acknowledged that it was important to bring more experience and knowledge into the classroom, but did not go into detail about what this would mean for teaching and learning. In a series of comments related to the performance of teachers, Lynn Rivers (Michigan) commented that in her experience as a former local school board member, she observed that implementing individualized learning plans designed to promote achievement in under performing students was extremely time consuming. Of major concern for her was what support teachers could expect if asked to put such measures in place. Paige sidestepped the concern by saying such methods were not add-ons; they were the basis for instruction, and he did not address how funding or time for training would be provided to teachers. Concern for funding and oversight was reiterated by John Tierney (Massachusetts), who quoted Paige as stating that "States are 100% responsible for educating students in this country" (p. 37), a quote to which Paige agreed. Much like the Senate hearing, debate stayed at a practical level, with little discussion about teaching and learning being advanced.

One member, Vernon Ehlers (Michigan) expressed the desire to see science and math education receive more attention due to recent government-sponsored increases in the number of work visas given to professionals in technical fields so that domestic shortages might be addressed. And Ruben Hinojosa (Texas) invited Paige to think about education in new ways when considering how to best meet the needs of fluid populations such as migrant workers and their children, and how to better train Head Start professionals so that new requirements for quality teachers could be met. And while much of the discussion remained at a concrete level, an issue that kept returning was how the federal role in education would be defined.

A third initial hearing, sponsored by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and titled "Transforming The Federal Role In Education For The 21st Century: Hearing On H.R. 1, H.R. 340, And H.R. 354," (March 29, 2001) set about to address some concerns expressed by business and education interests and to offer some guidelines for fostering a working relationship between federal and state levels of education administration. This hearing entertained perspectives not only from the legislative committee members and invited input from various executive groups and education unions or lobby groups, although from reading the transcripts of the session, it is unclear how individuals came to be invited to testify before the committee. From the text, it is likely that most were asked for input based on prior relationships with the current House Committee members, and several speakers were introduced personally by Representatives from their home States. Before the guests were allowed to speak , they were asked to sign letters of disclosure regarding what entity or entities they were to represent and they were asked to disclose any government grants these entities might

have received after October 1, 1998. Only one speaker, Dr. Paul Houston, from the American Association of School Administrators, stated that his organization received government grants. Each presenter was then given the opportunity to deliver a written statement to the committee that would outline concerns important to the represented entities, ones the entities believed to be necessary for Congress to consider in crafting NCLB.

Where the earlier discussions tended to center around questions of funding and concern over the place of the federal government in public education, the special interest speakers introduced new concerns to the dialogue. Keith Bailey, the Chairman and President of Williams, and energy firm, represented the interests of the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education. At the time of the hearing, this coalition included members such as Apple Computer, State Farm Insurance, Microsoft Corporation, national organizations including the Business Roundtable, The National Alliance of Business, the National Association of Partners in Education, and regional interests including the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Inland Empire Economic Partnership of California and the Pittsburgh Technology Council. In his prepared statement, Mr. Bailey expressed general support for the President's initiative by the members of the organization, with the recognition that quality of life for the individual and success in the advancement of technology at the national level both hinge on an educated citizenry. To this end, the organization voiced support for adopting higher standards in public schools and that high quality assessments aligned to these standards should be used to measure student progress. The coalition also cited the NAEP as a potential measure to be used to insure that students in all states were achieving at comparable levels. Areas of special interest for the group included an increased focus in math and science instruction and

advances in technology education. Given the membership of the coalition, these wishes are unsurprising. It was also noted that teachers should receive better preparation and training, with more emphasis on the use of technology in the classroom. And in reference to ongoing concerns of House committee members, the coalition called for a strong federal role in setting standards for accountability and funding, but called for State and local flexibility in creating procedures to achieve goals and in the allocation of funds. It is apparent from this text that industry concerns closely paralleled the President's blueprint.

The second presenter was Kenneth L. Connor, the President of the Family Research Council, which is based out of Florida. According to Mr. Connor, the Family Research Council functions as an advocate for education reform, with the express goals of returning education decision making to parents, teachers and local school personnel. He also stated that the Council was very much in favor of the emphasis on academic excellence rather than social priorities, which were unnamed. Although his group showed some appreciation for accountability measures, particularly school report cards that would be made available to parents, there was much concern over any efforts to create what could be called a national curriculum or national test, as such efforts would be directly opposed to a major goal of the Council, namely greater local education agency (LEA) and parent control of student learning. To this end, Connor's group called for more flexibility in providing parents with alternatives to failing schools before the required three-year marker proposed for NCLB. He also asked for consideration of tax credits and education savings accounts to aid parents in seeking out quality providers of education.

In an interesting, and heretofore unspoken addition to the dialogue surrounding NCLB, Connor asked for assurances about the purposes of assessment. He seemed very concerned that assessments be focused on academic concerns and not stray into usage as instruments of political and social indoctrination. It is unclear from the text what Connor means by political and social indoctrination. Since it could be argued that historically, schools have often served as transmitters of culture, nationalism, and political and social (Foucault, Discipline and Punish) thought, it may be that Connor has some underlying views guiding his presentation of which he may be unaware. However, he does offer some insight when citing the Council's opinion that reading and math should be tested, but that science should remain out of the assessment requirements for NCLB. This is in spite of virtually every other member present at the Committee hearing expressing the need for beefed up science instruction and assessment to ensure U.S. success over other nations in the advancement of technology. In his defense, Connor cited the case of science instruction in Kansas as an example of the dangers of how instruction could be used to indoctrinate children in views considered controversial, which appears to be a different focus altogether. Although this matter was raised during the question and answer part of the hearing, Connor did not clarify his position, and simply restated his concerns based on the Kansas incident. No other members spoke for or against this specific position on science instruction on Kansas.

The third position paper was presented to the committee by Dr. Gail Foster, who represented the interests of the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Toussaint Institute Fund. According to the paper, Dr. Foster began her career as a public school teacher, and as and advocate for parent choice founded the Toussaint Institute Fund to aid low-income parents in accessing good schools for their children. For the most part the

focus of her position was to secure certain measures regarding school choice for poor families, and in particular, inner-city African-American families. Of primary concern was the setting of three years as a guideline for declaring schools failures and giving parents options and funds for changing schools. For her and the parents she represented, three years in a failing school could leave children so far behind that moving could make little difference. In her paper, she cited anecdotal evidence to support her argument, and urged committee members to provide the same level of access to good schools that committee members would have for their own children.

Also presenting before the committee was Randi Weingarten, the then President of the American Federation of Teachers in New York City, and the Vice-President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. Her paper was given to present the views for the AFT and its teacher members. Ms. Weingarten described the main concern of the AFT during the reauthorization of ESEA and the addition of requirements under NCLB, as being focused on the appropriation of Title I monies. She expressed the AFT's support for legislation calling for more money to be funneled into Title I, given the AFT's position that many economically disadvantaged children had benefited greatly from programs funded through Title I.

Her main caveat for NCLB was also related to funding. While the AFT was very much in support of school choice, Ms. Weingarten described concerns by the organization that schools receiving federal funds should be held to the same standards of accountability as any public school. This opinion was shared by several other committee members. Unsurprisingly, the AFT also agreed that teacher compensation packages should be developed to draw bright young people to teaching and to encourage

experienced teachers to stay. However, she warned that the union would not support moves toward merit pay, which typically ties increases in teacher pay directly to gains in students performance, possibly on state-mandated assessments. Although Mr. Bailey did not voice this view in his position paper for the Business Coalition, historically, this has been an incentive model proposed by business interests (Callahan, 62).

Dr. Paul Houston also offered concerns for an education organization from his position as the director of the American Association of School Administrators. As a former teacher and school administrator with 35 years of experience, Dr. Houston voiced hi organization's support for the high standards and systems of accountability proposed by House members in response to requirements of the NCLB blueprint. He also expressed the support of his organization for increases in funding for the most needy schools, and for a stronger federal role in funding education mandates. His group also supported school choice, but like other committee speakers, stopped short of supporting a voucher system.

For his group, a discussion regarding funding was of the utmost importance. He cited ongoing difficulties many states continue to face in the struggle to fund schools in an equitable manner. To make his point, he outlined the potential for disparity in services between low and high revenue districts, and stated that under current systems of funding the most needy go wanting. He also attacked the prevalent system of funding schools through property taxation as being outdated at best, with poor rural districts suffering from a lack of properties taxed at high rates. It is clear that he is asking Congress members to reconsider the federal role in education, particularly in the area of funding and oversight of said funding. In representing the views of his group, it was important to

ask lawmakers to think beyond antiquated methods of school funding and consider methods that went beyond those under state or local control.

Dr. Houston made a second point in calling for a stronger role for the federal government by describing how pressures from parents and special interests groups faced by state and local education boards may make the ideal allocation of funds impossible. He noted that local school board members, as officials elected from the community, face enormous pressures from parents, and that funding may become a matter of oiling the squeaky wheels. He also detailed the problems with relying on members of the state legislature to effectively address funding concerns. In his opinion, most legislators hail from suburban communities that do not tend to house the schools with the most needs. As such, he questioned the ability of these legislators to get beyond constituent pressure in making decisions about how to fund schools. Dr. Houston backed these assertions with data taken from a January 1998 GAO study that indicated on average, States target 62 cents per poor student for every dollar spent on all students. In contrast, the federal government spent $4.73 per poor student for every dollar spent on all students. For his group, this was a testament to power of the federal government to get aid to the most needy. This perspective also serves to add an interesting dimension to the discussion surrounding the role of the federal government in education. Through this argument, Houston seems to be acknowledging that State and local agencies do not have the power or control to best serve the needs of their students. He also seems to be inferring that local officials may be afraid to be the "bad guys" in going against the sentiments of vocal constituents whose voices might not represent the most needy. A more cynical position could be that local officials do not act in order to preserve their positions in office. It seems that Dr. Houston may be looking to the federal government to act as an enforcer,

but it is questionable if he has thoroughly considered the special interests that bring pressure to decision making at the federal level.

Houston also called for more federal oversight in the areas of assessment development and use. A concern of his association was that tests could be used in ways that invalidated results. He cited studies on high stakes testing by the National Academy of Science and joint statements from the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association and the National Council on Measurement in Education in support of his position that tests should be used strictly for the purposes they were created and not in areas where they have no validity. Given that test development can be an exhaustive and expensive process, his organization felt that states might need federal oversight and funding to develop assessments that are aligned with state curricula and that test students fairly, but rigorously. This position on the federal role in assessment is more in line with the views expressed by Mr. Bailey and the Business Coalition than the AFT. Given that school administrators, especially district superintendents take on a role that is more akin to running a business than teaching, this positioning seems logical. However, it also raises questions about how the views of a campus or district administrator interface with the views held by classroom personnel in terms of the purposes of education and the role of the government in education.

A final concern of the association also involved government oversight in terms of funding. In many ways, this concern was similar to those voiced by Senators and House members in earlier meeting with Education Secretary Rod Paige regarding block grants. For most of the participants in the discussion, the issues boils down to, "I don't really care what the Education Department wants to add to NCLB as long as my pet projects are

funded and my most vocal constituents are satisfied." In looking at the block grants proposed under the reauthorization of Title I, members were concerned that combining funds for various programs, could, in spite of intentions to streamline the funding process, result in a loss of funds to existing, and often successful programs. Additionally, Dr. Houston's group feared that block grants could actually lead to reduced accountability for how monies are spent and how programs fare. These fears bring a new dimension to the discussion surrounding NCLB by acknowledging the power of the status quo, and the real difficulties faced in bringing widespread change to education, an institution accused by some of being reified, much to the detriment of children.

The final invited speaker was William S. White, President and CEO of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Like Dr. Foster, Mr. White's testimony focused on a very specific and personal issue, that of maintaining the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative as a separate program, rather than combining it with other education-related initiatives such as the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. He described the Mott Foundation's 75-year commitment to funding and supporting school and community partnerships designed to meet the needs of children and families at the local level. He also remarked that the foundation had spent more than $100 million over three years in support of the 21st Century after school initiative. He cited the growth of the program over the course of three years as going from serving 50,000 children and 15,000 adults in 99 communities to serving 1.2 million children and 450,000 adults in 1500 communities. Also lauded was the Foundation's system of accountability for spending based on the rigorousness of the application process. In terms of adding to the dialogue about education, Mr. White, through his advocacy for local programs, emphasized the involvement of the community and the importance of power for local

individuals to make decisions about services as being primary in the creation of education-related infrastructure that maintains success over time. Where other groups tended towards moving away from local control, Mr. White, along with Dr. Foster and Mr. Connor saw local control as being vital to student success. He also reminded members that sometimes, those at the federal level may not know what is best for and what is working in education, and that foundations such as the Mott, have amassed valuable data aver many years of experience that could serve to inform policy development and funding efforts. For him, it seemed important that the government give some attention to the experiences of those working as the local level.

House members were asked to consider these prepared statements and then engage the presenters in a series of questions determined to clarify point related to the pending education legislation. The meeting opened with remarks from the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, John Boehner (Ohio). In these remarks, Boehner reminded members of failures by schools to educate low-income children to grade level functioning, particularly in reading. He also decried past spending efforts, saying that $85 billion dollars spent over the past ten years had not achieved the expected gains for disadvantaged students. Additionally, he cautioned that it would be necessary for member to think of schooling, and in particular remediation in new ways, including the possibility of changing the traditional schedule for school. Members of the committee were then invited to question the guest speakers, along with considering the points made in the individually prepared briefs included in the final transcripts of the committee meeting. Given that speakers were limited to five minutes, the discussion did not advance much beyond the concerns recorded in the individual briefs, which tended to focus on concerns of allocations of funding, protection for special interests and a general

expressed desire to raise academic standards and to increase levels of accountability for schools, states and the federal government. As an example, the first speaker, Mr. Bailey, representing the Business Coalition for Excellence, did little to expand his position beyond his prepared statement. When questioned briefly regarding the position of the coalition toward the role of the federal government in education, he said that with contributions to States and local districts running approximately 7% from federal sources, the federal government could expect to take a strong leadership role, but would need to be mindful of the concerns and rights of State governments and local districts which are ultimately responsible for funding much of public schooling. This position appeared to be in agreement with that of Mr. Boehner, the Committee chairman who expressed that the federal government should adopt a role of leadership, but allow the states to do the real work of educating children. The remainder of the hearing continued in the same vein, with each invited speaker was questioned in a similar manner. Only Mr. Connor's voiced concerns over the potential for nationalized curricula or assessment programs sparked any heated debated, as his hands-off philosophy seemed at odds with the role of the government as envisioned by other committee members.

The House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce held a Subcommittee Hearing on Education Reform on July 17, 2001. In the months since the March hearing, it is apparent that committee members have spent much time in considering education issues as the meeting transcript records more specific questions for the speakers rather than the polite entertainment of ideas recorded in prior transcripts. It is also possible that this is due to the fact that the speakers invited to this meeting consisted of heads of large districts from across the country and education researchers from respected universities. As in prior hearings, speakers were asked to prepare written

statements to be read by House members prior to the hearing. The first written statement from House Subcommittee Chair, Michael Castle (Delaware) expressed what concerns the subcommittee hoped to addressed and set the tone for the ensuing dialogue. In his remarks, Mr. Castle cited the need to develop the relationship between research and evaluation in education and policymaking and practice. In his view, more needed to be done to produce quality research on education and to use research finding to drive policy decisions and implementation of policies at the state and local levels, so that students could benefit from the most effective practices. He went on to describe several large government studies of practices, but lamented that such studies seemed to have little real effect on how schools continue to operate. In just a few lines, he was able to capture the disconnect between the various levels of research, decision-making and practice that have dogged education in America for over 100 years. For him, it was vital for the groups to work together to improve the quality of education research, with an emphasis on science-based approaches, to improve the dissemination of such research so that it's access by policy makers and educators could be more efficient, and finally, that the federal government agency OERI (Office of Education Research and Improvement) would be restructured so that the first two goals could be achieved. A second statement by subcommittee member Judy Biggert (Illinois) supported the remarks by Mr. Castle and added that work done by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory could serve as a model of how a research institution can successfully interface with practitioners and community members.

Dr. Frank Newman, Professor of Public Policy and Sociology at Brown University provided the first written testimony. While he agreed that much research has been done in education, he felt that little was of good quality, which he claimed hinges on

carefully formulated research designs and carefully constructed hypotheses. He said that too much research is based on anecdotal evidence and opinion, and that such studies tend to offer a biased agenda. He also made a rather puzzling remark that opinion and anecdotal research tend to have too narrow of a focus to advance a reform agenda. When these two statements are taken together, one wonders if it is a problem of agendas being biased of the 'wrong' agenda being advanced by opinion and anecdotal study. These statements may also indicate some assumptions he holds about the nature of research and value freedom, and could serve to provide a starting point for dialogue clarifying perspectives on education and related research. And in a final point, possibly even more telling than the first few, Newman states that education research is not funded adequately with respect to the importance placed on improving education. The reason for this, in his view is the relative lack of respect for education research as a university discipline, and as such receives short shrift from policy makers when compared to the use of research in making decisions for medical or economic concerns. So it is likely that the potential to include more voices in a dialogue about education is lost.

Dr. Susan Fuhrman, the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania introduced more concerns about gaps in communication between research, policy and practice. For Fuhrmann, one potential barrier to dialogue lies in the languages spoken by the different disciplines. She cited evidence that researchers tend to focus on qualifying and arguing over findings, while policy makers, by the nature of their positions, work to gain definitiveness and consensus (Kaestle, 1993; Lagemann, 1997). The idea that for different groups, there is a different purpose for dialogue about education, as well as differing expectations about outcomes of or goals for the dialogue serve to raise the level of difficulty for those seeking to unite these groups in

discourse. Fuhrman went on to advance the idea that research, rather than having a direct, instrumental effect on policy making tends to influence indirectly as a conceptual influence and impacts discourse surrounding policy making more than the actual policy document. As evidence of this thinking, she puts forth the concept of "enlightment" (Weiss, 1980; Weiss & Buculavas, 1980), which describes how research gradually filters into the main policy discourse. According to her, this is can be a long slow process where new ideas are introduced and these ideas may help frame questions, or provide frameworks in which to examine existing assumptions. The slow nature of this filtration of ideas may serve to divorce these ideas from the original research and to place them in the public domain of ideas, which in turn obscures the level of influence research could have on policy making.

Even though influence is often difficult to trace, Dr. Fuhrmann stressed that there remains the need to include research findings in the discourse surrounding policy, and offered some suggestions for strengthening the relationships between policy, research and practice. She noted that researchers should consider the types of questions that need to be answered for policy makers. One possibility would be experimental or quasi-experimental design used to answer questions regarding the effectiveness of a particular approach. For questions addressing how policies morph into practice, she believes that research must take qualitative measures to introduce the voices of those being asked to work within the framework of the policy. Another important point for Dr. Fuhrman was that research should if at all possible be longitudinal in nature in order to show results or effects over time. This type of study provides researchers the opportunity to build working relationships with practitioners, which in turn may serve to increase the amount of research disseminated to those outside of the academy. This could also have the effect

of inviting voices into discourse regarding policy, research and practice by making local stakeholders more aware of the languages and concerns of each group. Dr. Furhmann also placed importance on replicating studies so that practitioners and policy makers could gain some understanding about what does or doesn't work across different learning environments. Again, this has the potential to add more voices and experiences to the discourse. Finally, it is important for the massive body of education research be synthesized in some fashion to make it more accessible to the layperson, and to indicate areas of research that can provide solid evidence for policy makers and practitioners to use in decision making.

Dr. Fuhrmann concluded her prepared statement with a few remarks on the role of research and development centers in contributing to the development of a body of knowledge about education. It is important to note that she doesn't remark on what types of knowledge might be gathered, so it would appear further discussion related to the types of knowledge encountered in education practice and research would be critical to advancing dialogue and ultimately partnership between the realms of practice, research and policy making. In stating that the collections of knowledge should be cumulative, it is possible that she has some teleological perspective in mind, but this is not explicitly stated in her testimony. Although she describes research done by her associated agencies as working to examine four comprehensive instructional reform initiatives in terms of effectiveness for increasing student learning, these initiatives are not described in any detail, so one is uncertain which beliefs about education are being examined. In some ways this lack of detail relegates discourse during the committee exchange to a surface level by not making current belief systems about how we educate students more transparent. So the topic remains fuzzy even while she calls for deeper relationships

between the decision-making factions surrounding education. However, she does offer some clues as to how the agencies with which she is associated, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and OERI, contribute to the larger discourse about education. For the most part contributions to the discourse arise from large-scale longitudinal studies conducted in collaboration with local school districts, and the types of knowledge being privileged include the relationship between instructional content and its alignment to standards, the effects of professional development on learning, with the primary goal of advancing successful education reform initiatives. Since the House members present for the hearing have no real knowledge of the programs being studied, they are only getting part of the discussion. If a goal of the academy is to collaborate with policy makers and practitioners, it becomes important for it to educate these groups about the discourse strands that run through the field of education research, and contribute to an understanding of how research may be contextualized in policy and practice. Fuhrmann is right in saying that research needs to respond to the needs of practitioners and policy makers in a timely manner, but with her focus on consolidating the body of education research into a more accessible form, it is possible that some voices could be lost if they don't fit into what it deemed important types of knowledge by the organizations responsible for collecting and disseminating information. Dr. Furhmann does argue that these agencies are working to collaborate with policy makers and practitioners through various publications and sponsored forums, but, possibly due to time and space constraints does not offer a picture of what discourse is included in the efforts.

Written testimony from Mary Anne Schmidt was then presented for consideration by the Hearing committee. Ms. Schmidt testified as the President of New American

Schools, an organization that works closely with groups such as the RAND Corporation to perform research and development in schools, with the aim of raising student achievement. For Ms. Schmidt, much of the difficulty in accessing education research and translating it into practice stems from the long turn around time required for many studies to be published after completion. If research is to have an impact on decisions for practice, it needs to be disseminated in a timely manner, especially with increased pressure for States and local districts to make academic gains as quickly as possible so that no child is left behind. Ms. Schmidt stated that this time shift could be accomplished by developing a more interactive role between researchers, makers of instructional materials and practitioners so that the effect of research would be to help troubleshoot and develop instructional practice rather than losing time through critiquing an end product. More importantly, Ms. Schmidt points to ongoing infighting in the education research regarding a lack of consensus on standards and protocols. This assertion would seem to be an invitation to educators and researchers to take the time to talk about what is being done in research and practice, and to actually listen to what is being said. Given that education in America has supported many of the same tired arguments since the inception of public schooling, it is vital that elements that may be reifying the discourse be identified and addressed if the discussion is to advance. Ms. Schmidt also notes that such infighting in the academy, when observed by practitioners and the general public makes it less likely for them to take seriously work presented to them by the academy. This tends to further the disconnect in dialogue between the levels of stakeholders. In offering four recommendations for improving the field of education research and expanding its contributions to discourse and policy making, Ms. Schmidt calls for more input from those working in the classroom about what practitioners need from research, taking input beyond a teacher representative on some national board to a more formal and

representative practitioner body. She did not elaborate as to what this would be structured or how collaboration and dialogue could be encouraged.

As the Superintendent for the Austin Independent School District in Austin, Texas, Dr. Pat Forgione offered the hearing committee some perspective as to the needs and concerns of a diverse urban school district. With over 78,000 students and 100+ schools, this district serves a student population that is close to 50% Hispanic, with 42% of the overall student population qualifying as economically disadvantaged. Many of the difficulties faced by the district mirror those NCLB seeks to address. As mentioned in earlier sections of this paper, Texas has been cited as a leader in the standards and accountability movement, so Dr. Forgione has some familiarity with the demands such reforms place on states and local districts. In his experience, such demands are best met by forming partnerships with federal agencies, such as the National Center for Education Statistics, of which he was once the head, and research institutions such as the Institute for Learning housed at the University of Pittsburgh. Through working with a national center responsible for compiling data related to virtually every area of education, from funding issues to school progress on various academic subjects, schools would be better informed to make decisions for campuses based on past numbers and predicted trends. To create such a partnership involves those working in schools being willing to collect information and to submit information in a timely manner. Practitioners would the collection of data as a valuable enterprise and one that would have timely and positive effects on instruction. In turn, it would be necessary for the NCES to get data to schools in a timely fashion and in a form digestible to the layperson. For this dialogue to be successful, it seems, as in other areas previously mentioned, it becomes important for participating groups to be educated in the language of each discrete group. Forgione does

not offer many ideas about how this might happen, and seems rather to envision a type of top-down communication where data feedback is given to district central office administrators who then pass selected pieces of information to campus staff members. If, as mentioned by other speakers, buy-in to reform movements has been identified as an obstacle to policy implementation, it seems that a goal of a school district might be to include the voices of those responsible for implementation in the initial decision-making processes.

This emphasis on the use of top-down communication of information is also to be found in Forgione's description of the relationship between the Austin Independent School District and the Institute for Learning (IFL) headed by Dr. Lauren Resnick. Forgione describes the goal of the partnership as raising the level of student learning in the district by "raising and reinforcing the levels of understanding among teachers and principals of the Nine Principles of Learning" (95). These principles are based on years of classroom research conducted by teams led by Dr. Resnick. To achieve this understanding, all administrators and teachers are required to undergo training transmitted by the IFL and to commit to a focus on the first three principles – Clear Expectations, Academic Rigor, and Accountable Talk. Dr. Forgione speaks in glowing terms about the partnership with the IFL and indicates that he believes it is successfully raising the level of instruction in AISD. However, the people who act directly with the IFL tend to be from high levels in administration, and it is uncertain how much teachers are able to actively participate in a dialogue about what is working and what is not in regard to the instructional models given to them to use. Additionally, no mention is made of adding other stakeholders to the discussion about the best instructional methods; the voices of parents and students are absent from the text. If one of the goals of NCLB is to

give parents more information and power in order for them to be more effective consumers of education services, it seems districts must work harder to understand their needs as parents and to educate them about how their children are being instructed. Obviously this involves schools working to make their instructional practices more transparent and giving parents the language needed to participate in education discourse. Although Dr. Forgione does not intend to solve such a problem in the confines of his paper, he does admit that there are divisions in values and approaches that run deeply through the field of education, and action calls for care and deliberation. Again, this begs the question of why these value discussions are not to be found during these hearings and are not found to any great degree in the written testimonies of invited speakers.

In a final piece of written testimony, Dr. Albert Bennett, the Director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research added support to the view that researchers must work to establish relationships with policy makers, practitioners and community members in order for what is being said in research to have value. In the experience of the Consortium, the production of high-quality and technically sound research has been important, but falls short of meeting the needs of those in the education community at large. As echoed in earlier testimony, the Consortium stresses the need for research to be made explicitly available to teachers, principals and parents, and that researchers have a responsibility to educate these groups in order to support the introduction of new ideas into schools and ultimately to sustain local reform efforts. Dr. Bennett acknowledged that building this type of relationship with various public factions has taken many years, from the foundation of the Consortium in 1990. At first, the relationships existed primarily between the Consortium and a very few groups of individuals who typically digested research similar to that conducted by the Consortium. As it was able to fund

more positions, the Consortium began to get reports and research findings to parents, teachers and community members. That their focus group was a particular city might have had some effect on the ability of the group to make community connections, but Dr. Bennett noted that even with a relatively small audience, it was process of informing groups turned out to be complex and labor-intensive. And while he deems the process a success, he admits that relationships with other research institutions has been easier to build than relationships with principals, teachers and parents, and cites the sheer number of local stakeholders to be addressed as an obstacle to forging strong ties with local school communities. He is clear that the research community must work harder to make overtures to those who could most benefit from research findings, but offers little concrete advice this expansion of education discourse would best be accomplished.

In the hearing conducted along with the presentation of written testimony, House committee members were able to ask questions of the invited guests. Given the constraints of the hearing, which included five minute speaking limits, and members coming and going as votes were being taken on other pieces of legislation, the discussion did not advance much beyond what was written. However, a few key points were reiterated. For speakers, it was of extreme importance that research institutions work harder to develop relationships with policy makers, practitioners and community members so that research findings could be used by those who most need them, and such findings should be disseminated in a timely manner. Unfortunately, no member of the hearing was able to offer much as to how this expansion and strengthening of relationships could be accomplished other than through hard work and education of users of research over time. According to Ms. Schmidt, the President of the New American Schools research and development organization, this education was vital, because in her

experience, practitioners were largely unaware of what could taken from research and as a result tended to rely on personal experiences to drive instruction. This supports the idea of a divide in values and approaches in education as described in the written testimony of Dr. Forgione, a divide that could contribute to reified positions in a larger on education in America.

THE PRODUCTS OF THE HEARING: THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

As a product resulting from a year of Senate and House hearings, The No Child Left Behind Act blended existing education policy with more concretely realized mandates for systems of accountability and standardization modeled on programs developed at the state level in states such as Texas. As may be expected, NCLB carries with it values that have been present in education policy and thought since the early days of education in America. As described in the historical overview, the purveyors of these values included heads of school districts, university researchers, leaders in industry and local business, and politicians. It is no surprise that this list of contributors mirrors the individuals that were asked to testify in the hearing for NCLB regarding items that should be included in the creation of the policy. As in the historical overviews of voices in education policy, voices from practitioners at the campus level contributing to the dialogue on NCLB are largely absent, which according to Orfield (2003) serves to fracture the process of policy implementation. Given that the policy weighs in at close to 1000 pages, it is questionable if teachers, left out of the creation of the policy, have deep understandings of its intentions and how those intentions are to be made flesh. In a system where information trickles down from the federal to the State and then to local levels, teachers tend to be exposed to NCLB in piecemeal fashion, getting only the

information they need to perform a required instructional task. Without a broader understanding of the policy, and the values it embodies, it becomes difficult to understand long-term implications for education in America, given that for practitioners at the campus level, what is conveyed regarding the policy consists of a laundry list of techniques designed to improve and assess student performance. And if the values handed down are inconsistent with those held by practitioners, what happens to teaching and learning? With such a possibility for disconnect, it becomes important to question whether values written into the policy are consistent with values held by practitioners with respect to the meanings and purposes of education, as well as what constitutes knowledge and learning. In order to examine the occurrence of a disconnect between policy and practice, it is necessary to review the titles of NCLB and identify embedded values in preparation for interviewing practitioners.

The initial NCLB document was primarily a reauthorization of previous education policy that took the form of ten titles. Due to being designated controversial and therefore more newsworthy, some titles have received more attention from the public than others. Due to the assessment component that has been introduced into the law, Title I has been at the heart of most of the discussions surrounding NCLB. Title II, which calls for the preparation and recruitment of highly qualified teachers has received some attention, mostly due to confusion about the meaning of "highly qualified." Also garnering some attention is Title III, which addresses academic needs of students identified as having limited proficiency in English and invites controversy regarding appropriate education services for students new to America. Inspiring some additional controversy is Title V, which promotes informed parental choices. For the general public, the meat of this Title revolves around the ability of parents to choose which

school their child may attend. It addresses the charter school system, already in place in most States, and raises the question of a need for a voucher system, an idea that provokes heated debate at all levels of government. In addition, Title V allows for the sanctioning of low-performing schools by giving parents the ability to move students in such schools to higher performing campuses. A final title that has received public attention, especially at the state and local district level involves how funding may be used in schools. Originally touted in the proposal for NCLB, Title VI provides for flexibility in how States and districts may use funds. However, this desired goal of flexibility in funding allocation has come under some scrutiny because it seems difficult for schools to achieve in the face of accountability constraints. Of the five remaining titles, relatively little has been addressed public forum. Title IV addresses concerns for safe and drug-free schools. Title IX, General Provisions also contains legislation pertaining to school safety and provides parents with options for moving students from schools deemed unsafe. Title VII serves the special needs of Native American populations, and Title VIII seeks to address needs of students educated in or near government facilities. The final title, Title X focuses largely on the McKinney-Vento Act, which targets the needs of homeless students and their families. This title has received more attention in connection the recent catastrophic events in the southern United States, and the ensuing need to provide adequate access to education for displaced students. In an attempt at brevity, attention will be focused on Titles I, II, III, V and VII.

A primary goal of the reauthorization was to improve on the implementation of policy covered under Title I. A cornerstone of American education policy, Title I was originally designed to ensure that all children, regardless of race or level of poverty had access to free public education. Much of the initial rhetoric for Title I arose from the

Civil Rights movement of the 1960's and was written in to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the ideals embodied in the original policy have persisted through today. Foremost is the idea that every child in America regardless of race or sex has the right to a public education. With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), this was expanded to include children with disabilities. Where NCLB has expanded the idea of a right to education is in calling for the right to a *quality* education for all students for all students regardless of race, sex, ethnicity and poverty level. The title requires that quality in education is to be determined by effective educational practices that are grounded in scientifically based research. All improvement plans, professional development and technical assistance provided to low-performing schools must be based on strategies that demonstrate documented effectiveness (NCLB Desktop Reference, 2002). These requirements indicate the valuing of scientific methodology, and may indicate an increase in the use of technique-driven instruction or a more instrumental approach to teaching and learning (Ellul, 1954).

In an effort to provide a quality education for all students, teachers working in Title I schools must be certified in the subject area in which they are teaching, and schools that are low-performing for two straight years may be asked to replace staff members or, in extreme cases, may be asked to turn over control to the State. By including this piece of legislation, policy makers have sought to address an ongoing problem in districts where students attending Title I schools endure the highest rates of teacher turnover and an increased likelihood they will be instructed by teachers uncertified in the subject area being taught. In addition to teachers being held to higher professional standards, students along with individual campuses and districts will be held to higher standards as well. In probably the most examined mandate of NCLB, States are

required to have in place a system of accountability that measures the progress of all student groups served in grades three through eight. Report cards detailing individual student, campus and district performance will be generated at the State and local levels. Specific annual objectives will also be put in place to determine if students are making progress and data collected will be disaggregated to determine if all student groups are achieving at the proposed levels. In order to provide adequate support for schools, the federal government has offered financial assistance to support schools in meeting high academic standards. Such assistance may be directed toward academic remediation for struggling students and the education of parents regarding student performance and school choice. As in creating instructional programs, data-driven methodologies take a front seat in deciding how to assess students, which standards will be used and what rewards or sanctions will be meted out to local districts. The policy attempts to provide some flexibility for states in designing systems of accountability, which seems to indicate a continued valuing of local control, a view that is consistent with historical trends in education governance. However, a failure to clearly spell out expectations for testing and reporting has resulted in States and local districts being handed sanctions for failing to achieve unclear government expectation of student progress. And the gap in communication has been made more transparent in the dialogue regarding the discrepancy in the amount of funding needed to establish and support programs under Title I and the amount of money provided by the government. To a certain extent, this has tended to foster a sense of distrust between federal and state levels as states struggle comply with federal mandates that appear to be under funded. That at least some of the dialogue surrounding NCLB, and in particular, funding for its dictates, has shifted to the court systems is an indication of the frustrations felt by States and local districts. And some States such as Utah have threatened to refuse government funding for education

rather than be responsible for upholding such an onerous education policy. That dialogue is virtually non-existent or has moved into the realm of litigation serves to underscore the importance of establishing more avenues of communication between the levels of policy and practice if the policy is to serve its intent of educating all children in the U.S. And if the federal government seeks to expand the requirements under the policy to the secondary level as put forth by Margaret Spelling, it would critical to gain a better understanding of how the policy is working in schools to avoid some of the controversies surrounding current implementation.

As in Title I, the requirements of Title II sit squarely on a foundation of scientifically-based research. Any training provided for teachers should arise from tested theories and methods in order to ensure that the teacher's young charges receive the best possible instruction. Of particular focus is the training for teachers working with students served in Title I schools, which underscores the intent of the policy to rectify what was previously perceived as substandard academic preparation of both teachers and students in these schools. In seeking to solicit individuals into the profession, attention will be given to recruiting individual strong in math and science in order to produce students that better meet the needs of industry and government. This push for an increase in proficiency in math and science is consistent with the concerns first voiced in *A Nation at Risk*. A second goal of the title is to provide students access to research-based early childhood instruction and to train teachers in researched-based methods. Additionally, any teacher-training program must be subjected to the same level of evaluation to determine its effectiveness in providing teachers with methods that ensure student success. This success is defined by gains in literacy, mathematics and science as measured by performance on standardized tests. So while requirements for increased

proficiency in the areas of reading, math and science are not new in education policy, what is new is the insistence on the use of scientific methodology to define best practices for teaching and for the training of teachers. What is less clear is who is responsible for such conducting such research, and if the values embedded in research methodology are consistent with values held at the level of practice. If teachers are expected to implement such science-based methods, it would seem important to include them as partners in the process of creating such methods.

Like the two titles before it, Title III seeks to provide guarantees for students most in need of academic support. As covered in this title, immigrant students and students with limited English proficiency will receive instruction from properly certified teachers who are expected to used methods developed from scientifically based research. Students will also be assessed regularly by State-developed tests to ensure that they are making adequate progress. Scores then become part of district and State report cards to encourage compliance with federal regulations. As in the first two titles, the policy is making a commitment to students groups that have historically received short shrift in American school systems, and intends to make transparent any progress that is made or not. In Texas, a State with a growing population of English Language Learners, the assessment program has grown to ensure that no student, no matter how new to the U.S. or new to the English language will receive some type of assessment that will be part of the district's accountability rating, and local districts are scrambling to comply with the requirements. Support for instructional methodology has come much more slowly, and although schools are given some flexibility in choice of instructional methodology, a major selling point of the Bush administration for NCLB, it is questionable how flexible schools are willing to or can be in preparing students to pass mandated assessments.

While it may be assumed that teachers working at the campus level are supportive of such safeguards for student progress, it could be important to determine similarities and differences in what is valued in bilingual education at the practice and policy levels, given that given that philosophical differences do exist (California Proposition 227, 1998).

One of the central ideas proposed by the Bush Administration involved promoting parent choice in educating children. As described under Title I, parents have the right to move students from low-performing schools to schools with better academic report cards. Title V seeks to expand parent choice by providing funding for charter schools that may provide viable options to traditional public schooling, with special funding consideration being given to charter schools that propose to serve student populations that have struggled in traditional systems. Since charter schools receive federal funds, they are answerable to the same accountability measures that traditional public schools are. Beyond charter school funding and guidelines, much of Title V is not new and is simply a reauthorization of previous legislation.

Title VI provides for the funding deemed necessary to aid States in designing systems of assessment and reporting. Where assessment was promoted as best practice in prior federal legislation, with NCLB, it became a mandate. A few States such as Texas already had comprehensive programs in place, but many States have been left scrambling to fulfill the federal requirements, with a lack of time and inadequate funding being two obstacles commonly cited. According to new portions under Title VI, funding would also be provided by States to use in seeking to increase the reliability and validity of assessment instruments, but it is questionable whether this funding has been sufficient to

meet State needs. It has also promised monies for the purpose of creating State standards and aligned assessments for subjects not required by NCLB as well as funding for developing and improving assessment programs for LEP students. Along with the development of various assessment instruments, funding is also made available for creating pieces of information design to inform parents about student progress. The title goes on to describe how data must be disaggregated s that student progress is more transparent to community stakeholders. From such data, school districts must develop annual objectives for improving student achievement and eliminating gaps between targeted groups. It is obvious from these brief examples that these systems of assessment under the accountability umbrella are very much valued as part of the vision NCLB offers for education in America. It is also possible with this push toward sharing information with parents that the federal government is seeking to somehow encourage parents to share responsibility with schools for educating students, but given remarks in the Strategic Plan (2001) regarding an inability to quantify or control parent contributions to education and the current preoccupation with the use of science-based data, this is unlikely, and schools will probably continue to shoulder the entire responsibility for a student's progress. More likely, the government is simply seeking to, as stated in the policy, "empower parents." From a practitioner perspective, one might support this raising of standards for all students and the increase in the dissemination of information to parents while questioning the parochial tone the government has appeared to adopt towards States and local districts as they work to meet the requirements (Orfield, 2003). Title VI makes the government's stance more explicit by calling for the withdrawal of certain types of funding if districts do not make adequate progress for two years.

Title VII advances the federal government's position on assessment by dictating how the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) may be used in conjunction with State-developed assessments to chart student progress across the country. Any schools receiving Title I funds may be selected to participate in NAEP administrations. Since the NAEP will be administered in all States, government officials will be able to track how well States compare with each other in educating students. As in previously discussed titles, science-based methods and the collection of data to drive instruction and funding remain important.

THE LAW BECOMES PART OF PRACTICE

After NCLB was signed into law in early 2002, states across the country were provided with information regarding what they would be expected to do to fulfill the obligations of the law. Since policy makers attempted to provide some flexibility in the law that would allow for states and local districts to maintain some autonomy in serving their students, educators were at a loss to determine what the federal government really expected in terms of compliance with the law. Because requirements for such focus points as systems of accountability and teacher quality were only loosely defined, state education agencies struggled to create these definitions for themselves and then to pass information on the districts in a timely manner. Little if any information was passed on to campus staff members in term of the scope of the policy; rather most information shared with practitioners spoke to the performance of discreet compliance tasks such as raising test scores or encouraging attendance. In the district where the educators surveyed for this study work, information coming from the state is often given to teachers at the last minute, and one has the feeling that all levels of education administration are

working overtime to understand how the law needs to be applied. Since no effort has been made by the district to educate practitioners about the larger picture of NCLB, it is unlikely that educators would be aware of the scope the law encompasses. Campus administrators would be expected to have greater knowledge of the law because they are entrusted with compliance needs for the campus. Additionally, since they regularly meet with the district superintendent, they have more access to an individual who contributes to education lawmaking at state and federal levels. Campus teachers would need to make a personal effort to educate themselves about the law's contents, possibly through accessing contacts at the district's central administrative office or union representatives.

It may be expected that educator responses about the purposes of education will more fleshed out than what policy makers were able to offer during the hearings. Since lawmaker speeches were time-limited and focused towards practical concerns of lawmaking, it is likely that within such constraints they were unable to address what is arguably a more esoteric concern. However, it may be important for lawmakers to visit this question as the reauthorization of NCLB approaches, so that an understanding of what it means to educate children in this country becomes more explicit. It would be hoped that gaining a deeper perspective on the purposes might shed light on commonalities that may exist between the views held by practitioners and policy makers and ultimately aid in the development of dialogue between the groups.

Chapter Four: The Results of Interviews with Administrators

In order to gain some perspective on educator views of the impact of NCLB on their practice, three administrators and six teachers were interviewed. Subjects were drawn from both of these campus positions in order to get a broader understanding of how NCLB is impacting campuses. Typically, administrators are expected to attend more training about law-related issues and should be able to talk about the impact of NCLB at the district and campus levels. Teachers generally receive information in campus level trainings and they should be able to offer insight about how instruction is directly affected by NCLB. All were asked questions drawn from the first interview protocol in Appendix A to determine their levels of understanding regarding the purposes of NCLB with respect to education and the effects it has on practice. They were also questioned about their personal views on the purposes of education in order to draw some comparisons or contrasts to the views expressed by policy makers during the congressional hearings for NCLB. The second set of questions from Appendix A was used to clarify the manner in which these educators work under NCLB. Since I currently work in education (see Appendix B for my background) and am a colleague of the interview subjects, I am in a unique position to talk with these educators as an educator, a fact that most likely influenced the content of the responses I was given. It was often difficult for me not to enter into a more conversational mode with these educators, especially when they seemed to have questions about politicians or the law. In order to maintain some clarity of response, I had to respect the voices of the respondents and to respect what they did or did not know. This meant letting people respond at their current level of understanding without undue prompting from me. All administrators and teachers

I interviewed work in the same large urban elementary school described in the methods section of the paper, and I have known them all for at least three years, so it is likely we have developed a certain amount of trust in our professional relationships, and I believe subjects made every attempt to be honest about what they did or did not know. In this chapter, each administrator interviewed is provided a section where the responses to her interview are summarized. Administrative educators interviewed for this chapter include Hannah, the principal for the school, Beck, the assistant principal and Carol, a former secondary teacher and central office administrator, who supports learning on campus by working with gifted and talented students. All names were chosen by the respondents as pseudonyms for the purposes of this study.

Hannah

Hannah, the principal for the school, brings a wealth of experiences to her position. She was initially a psychology major in college, but switched to education after working as a teacher's aide for a year. Although her position involved working with elementary students, she made the decision to pursue a placement in secondary education. She was a sociology/English double major, and upon graduation, she took a position in a middle school located in the Texas valley, which was a culture shock for a young woman originally from the East Coast. Coming from a homogeneous Anglo background, she had no experience with racial prejudices and remembers no negative discussions about different races while growing up, but was confronted with the very real existence of racism in her first few assignments. She describes these experiences as pivotal in helping her to understand issues faced by students in diverse settings. From her experiences in the Valley, she also came to understand some of the issues facing bilingual speakers and the prejudices that exist between recent and long-term immigrants. She describes how

speaking Spanish was stigmatized and was forbidden at school. However, despite obstacles of language, she was able to take a drama group to the State competition for drama where they won the first prize. After she married, she then moved to her current city where she took a job as a high school teacher. She admits to wanting to teach longer because she really loved working with the students. At this time, she began to be interested in gifted and talented education and started the first GT class at her high school. She laughs to think how naïve she was to school politics at that time, and realizes that some of her actions regarding the GT program were probably considered controversial by others. She taught several classes of English to students with a variety of academic skills and deficits which was really rewarding. She thinks her first year was probably not so good, but she says at that time there were no mentors – one just had to do it on their own. She eventually found a mentor in the writing lab teacher and this person has continued to be a friend and mentor through today. Finding such a valuable mentor has led her to understand that one must work to make connections to people with gifts because they can provide valuable guidance in how schools and students work.

Eventually, she was recruited to work at the central office as a gifted and talented specialist, a position she held for 16 years. Since she enjoys change, she was happy to make the move and found the department to offer new challenges every day. She helped with the development of information that was sent to schools to help them identify GT students and made presentations to schools about what GT programs should look like under the law. She then worked with training teachers and providing support for them at the campus level. As part of the language arts team, she helped develop units that supported instruction in the classroom. Her favorite part of the job was developing the leadership program that was put into schools across the district, and provided ropes

course training for these students. She also worked to coordinate community leaders to work with these student leaders in order to expose students to people doing exciting things in the community. Through this program, she moved more into the role of a school-community liaison for the gifted office. Through these partnerships, she was able to create more programs in schools and these programs received many awards for their successes. Her group started Invent Austin with MCI, which continued for a number of years. She also invited experts from many areas of science to work with students. This stint ended when the Gifted and Talented Office was gutted. At this point, she moved into the mentoring program and worked there for three years. She did go back to the GT office for a brief period, but by that time, it had become a compliance office, and working there was just not fun. She describes these experiences as valuable in that she was able to work with a diverse group of strong thinkers and she was able to learn much from them. She also feels that during that time, people in the office were encouraged to be innovative in developing new programs, which she found to be stimulating. Additionally, she came to understand the value of teamwork because having a strong team allowed them to create programs that helped thousands of children across the district.

When she left the GT office, she became an assistant principal and worked at two schools over several years. Her first school was not a good fit for her because she felt the environment was too negative and that communication between staff members was not good. When she was asked to come to her current school to be the assistant principal, she was excited to come because she felt she could have a positive impact on its school climate. For her this new school, which has a largely Hispanic, low SES population was radically different from her prior high SES, high performing school. She was shocked by the lack of academic planning occurring on campus and saw that the school was being

run by the loudest opinions, with some good teachers in hiding. She kept a low profile and was able to come in and work quietly on the academic performance of the school. During a crisis faced by the school she came to realize she would like to be the principal, and when the old principal retired, she was given the position. She had some fears that she would have trouble dealing with "b.s." coming from the district but agreed to take on the position despite her concerns. At this point, she has been the school principal for the past few years. Generally, she feels successful in her position and has seen real growth in teachers and in students on her campus. She feels that her school is doing innovative work in building learning communities and is excited that these ideas are being adopted by other schools in the district.

As a result of her vast set of experiences, she has come to have some strong ideas about what education can be. Essentially, she sees it as a great equalizer and that when it is done well, schools can change the lives of kids; that they can become thinkers. With education, students may become confident enough to ask questions and can take control of their own lives and make changes in the world. As we have more of the haves and have-nots, education increasingly becomes a vehicle for student success as adults. When considering what schools are doing to be successful, she points out that first we must come to an understanding of what success in education is. Schools that are typically labeled as highly successful usually receive recognition based on test scores, and because of their students demographics, their teachers may not have to do much to contribute to these higher scores. For schools to really be successful, they must battle the immediate gratification mentality that students are now bringing to school, and convince students that it is OK to be in a place where they can have calm conversations about what they are

learning. She says it is also important for students to be proud of their learning and to be able to explain to others what they are learning. In her experience, these things may be happening in some classrooms, but it is not the norm across schools or districts. She says that schools must also put effort into teaching students that hard work can make then successful, can make them smarter. She agrees that we need to find ways to work with students of poverty, because what works with middle or upper class students and families doesn't necessarily work with these students.

In moving on to dilemmas educators are facing today, she sees the biggest problems as being societal. Students come to school hungry, without health care, without materials, and their parents may be unable to work with them at home for a variety of reasons. They may also be exposed to abuse or family violence. She thinks that those outside of schools may not appreciate how the level of need has increased over the past few years. This lack of understanding, particularly at the political level tends to lead to law upon law designed to make schools do what they are supposed to do. She believes that there needs to be more dialogue about what schools can do rather than dictating plans of action that may or may not work. She cites the experiences of failing schools that have been placed on improvement plans as an example of this thinking and admits that such schools and their employees are often broken down by punitive outside oversight.

In a related issue, she addresses the importance of standardized testing in determining school competency. While she has at times felt testing to be ridiculous, she has come to see testing as forcing the district to consider the needs of impoverished students and to raise expectations for those students. However, the way the test has been used has not always helped children, with some successful schools being turned into drill

and kill schools where innovative programs have been pushed to the side. She attributes these problems to a heavy top-down approach that has been adopted in conveying district initiatives regarding testing and performance.

Along with the disconnect that exists between the various levels administration in schools comes a similar disconnect between schools and the public regarding how schools are faring. In Hannah's view, the public perception of success in education is based on a narrow understanding of what schools do. It is apparent that one must know something intimately to understand it and she thinks the average person simply does not have the level of experience required to fully understand what educators face. This lack of understanding may also extend to people working in the field of education, but not in the classroom. Even principals who do not make regular classroom visits may be out of touch with the demands of practice. She sees some success in bridging this lack of understanding in her own school, because the teachers work hard to create learning communities, and students are expected to share what they are learning with visitors to their classes. She also sees teachers sharing ideas within their learning communities that help to educate other about what schools are doing.

When asked about how legislators are seeing education, she first warns that since she does not work with them, she can only guess at what they might be thinking. She understands that education is a political hot topic, where people say they only want the best for children. This sounds like a legitimate concern, but she fears that politicians then look to schools for a quick fix regarding students who are struggling, especially if public money is being thrown at schools for this purpose. Since the legislators may not understand what is going on in schools or may not have experience working with children

of poverty, they may write policy that appeals to the public, but does not adequately address the concerns faced by Title I schools. She feels distrustful of the reasons why some of the policies are being made, and cites the federal initiative to offer incentive pay to teachers whose students have improved test scores. She wonders whom these laws will really benefit and says such laws smack of racism. She worries that such incentives will drive good teachers out of tough schools, and also feels that such programs lead the public to make assumptions about the abilities of students and teachers who work in low performing schools. She sees this type of policy making representative of a huge disconnect, with policy makers just not getting it. She describes the needs of the bilingual students on campus and says that the testing system does not adequately address what they know; that the test itself may get in the way of students demonstrating competency. She laments that we don't modify such tests enough meet the diverse needs of our students, and as an example opines that a lack of student success on the Spanish language test may contribute to public misunderstanding about the capabilities of these students.

In order to understand where the disconnect is occurring, Hannah has questioned many people about where politicians get their information when they are creating laws. She has been assured that they contact teachers for their thoughts, but is unsure which teachers are being contacted. She has also questioned higher-level district administrators about how passing rates are set for the State test, but says that her concerns seem to be ignored. Based on this lack of response, she wonders who is getting heard at the legislative level. She thinks that the law making process should be more transparent so the public and educators can understand who contributes to education law.

Upon considering the intent of NCLB, she feels the law was put in place to ensure that schools are doing everything to help all children succeed academically. Essentially, she sees the law as a testing issue, with tests being put in place to measure student learning. These tests work as part of an accountability system at State and federal levels. She also says that schools have received financial support to fund programs or targeted interventions required under the law and that the monies come with stipulations about how they can be spent. Districts receive information in a trickle-down fashion from the State regarding what they need to do for students. She agrees that mandates have helped schools become more consistent vertically and horizontally in their approaches towards instruction, and that in her district, instructional programming guides have proved to be helpful to teachers as they plan instruction. Alignment to this degree has been beneficial for diverse student groups served in a given classroom because the guides remind teachers to plan for students working at all levels. While NCLB has been helpful in establishing a need for this type of consistency, she feels that the law still does not go far enough in recognizing the needs of certain groups such as bilingual students. She also despairs that students who do show growth in learning are not recognized under the law if they don't pass the tests. In effect, such student may need to double the gains of other students in order to be included in the successes of a school. In particular students who come from poverty and come in to the school speaking another language may be at a disadvantage when tested under the current system, as compared to a student who has had every advantage and is rewarded for success gained through little effort. She sees this basically as a result of a "white" system of education and assessment that is in place in our country.

Regarding the impact of the law on education, she has seen an increase in top-down directives from the district. High-level administrators become concerned about test scores and performance and seek to put supports in place to ensure the district will look good on performance measures. Since she doesn't believe in top-down approaches, she looks for ways to empower teachers to make good decisions for their students, which essentially puts her in the role of a buffer between the central office and the campus. She sees them as trying to beat the system by being the best they can be, using the best research, the best practices, etc. She strongly believes that this can be accomplished through collaboration on teaching, learning and results. Educators must essentially become critical contributors to the learning environment so that central office does not see the need to come to campus with its dictates. She wishes that teachers could see the bigger picture of what they are trying to accomplish on campus, but sees most as being focused on their classroom or grade level team performance.

Asked about how legislators could make changes in order to make the law more workable, Hannah says that they first should look at what hasn't worked, in particular top-down mandates which do not empower the campus-level personnel that need to make important decisions for student learning. She would like to see a political campaign that educates the public about the intricacies of teaching and education so that the richness and beauty of the job would be promoted. She wants the public to see the possibilities for education without it being corny. She also wants for the public to see the need for parents to be partners with their schools so that students can do better and parents collaborate with schools regarding what is best for children. It is also important that policy makers and the public make some acknowledgement that teachers need to be compensated for the difficult jobs they do. The cost to society of not educating students

should also be made public to increase an understanding of the importance of education. In some ways what needs to be developed is a greater degree of trust among various levels of administration both on and off campus regarding what educators are doing to help students succeed. For Hannah, this trust is vital, because education is such huge system, no one group could possibly have an intimate understanding about how another group might be performing.

When asked about whom she feels comfortable approaching with education-related concerns, Hannah cites a close group of fellow educators that she feels share views on education. She also has a strong cadre of staff members on hr campus that she accesses when she needs support regarding the direction of the campus. When she attends principal meetings, she is not afraid to speak up about concerns and may be the only principal that asks the question every one else wants to ask. Since she has enjoyed some success in the district, fellow workers tend respect her opinions, and over the course of her career, she has made some allies that have helped her spread the community-building techniques used on her campus to other schools in the district. Her school has been invited to share its philosophies in a variety of venues and she is open to speaking with others about education issues from a variety of platforms. She would consider herself to he interested in politics and listens carefully to candidates regarding their views on education. In addition, she would feel comfortable talking with them personally or writing a letter to them about her concerns.

Beck

Beck is the assistant principal at the elementary school. A bilingual speaker in her thirties, Beck brings a strong sense of commitment to educating children who need

academic, social and emotional support to be successful in school. Originally a psychology major, she made the jump to education after working in a daycare during college. After graduating from a large State university with a focus on interdisciplinary studies and reading, she began teaching in her current elementary school, She taught at the first grade and second levels for six years before becoming a reading coach. In the course of her teaching career she gathered several honors including National Board Certification and being named a campus teacher of the year. During her career she has had the opportunity to display instructional leadership through being a district presenter for balanced literacy. When she began to examine her ability to make an impact on education, she considered her options and decided to enter the principal program at a local university. Upon completing the program, she asked herself how she could best support teachers and decided to reenter the field as an assistant principal at the school were she had previously taught. In this capacity, she has also had the opportunity to work with other campuses and districts as a presenter of learning community development strategies that are used on her campus at TEPSA. Although she is not certified as a bilingual instructor, she does speak Spanish and feels her heart to be in bilingual education.

When asked about her views on the purposes of education, she believes that for her, lessons learned from her family provide a base for her views. As a young girl growing up in the valley region of South Texas, she received the message that people became successful because they were educated, and that to strive for knowledge would open doors for one. In applying these lessons to her current situation in public school, she feels that children need this same kind of support, that they have a community of people believing in them and working to help them build their self-esteem and confidence

so that they can be successful. In her experience, education has helped her and her family members accomplish so much and she wants that for other children. In terms of what education can do for a child, it gives them something that they can work at, something they can accomplish and that can take them to the next level of what they want to be, what they have or want to achieve. In terms of the students she works with, she feels they view education as something that can get them the things they don't have and as a way to better their lives from the current difficult home environments within which some of them may be living.

A crucial area where she sees her school succeeding is in building community and sharing with students that they become smart through hard work. In this community, the members support students by working to provide an environment where students can be successful and they can feel supported in their learning. She also feels that they do a lot of motivating to help children by offering daily incentives for learning and behavior and fun after school classes to supplement academic coursework. Again she reiterates the importance of a community that helps students to see success for themselves, but also helps them to see how individual success contributes back to the learning community; that the success of one member is important for all. In order to do this, Beck says it is imperative that schools forge partnerships with parents to help educate them about student needs and to provide support where necessary. If strong bonds are formed with parents and the community, the school and education become central parts of our lives. She notes that this strong type of learning community is what she would wish for her own children.

Along with the importance of building a learning community designed to support children and to facilitate their entry into society as productive engaged citizens, she sees that the endeavor of education requires a great deal from the educator. She says that for herself and her friends in education, they are constantly thinking about their school jobs and how student learning can improve. As part of her commitment to improve student learning, she has taken the time to reflect on things she believes to be ongoing difficulties faced by many schools. While schools are trying to help students who need to improve, often the process of securing extra support seems to get in the way of providing timely interventions. For her, this is a grueling but necessary process involving the collection of much data, while in the meantime, the student may go without needed supports. She also points to the problem of inconsistencies between intervention offered by schools within the district and schools in other districts or States. Students often come to her school, clearly in need of services or academic supports, but according to school records, none have been provided by prior schools. For her, this has been an eye-opener that students are not necessarily having their needs met by public education, especially in light of the degree of interventions her school offers. Transience of families may contribute to the problem, but she identifies the poor communications that may exist between various systems within schools as particularly problematic. She also cites the special education identification process, which may take half of a school year to work through, as being especially unwieldy; even more so when applied to English Language Learners. Students within these bilingual groups, clearly needing help, often fail to qualify for services. Given that they come in with different language backgrounds, it is often hard to determine if the problem is one of language or disability with current assessments that are used in schools.

While these views seem consistent with those of her coworkers in education, she believes that the public sees something different regarding education. She cites the interest in performance on standardized testing in her State, and that discussions on education tend to boil down to what the scores are and how schools measure up as far as passing and failing rates. It doesn't seem that the public tends to focus on the successes children are having and the good things schools are doing. Left unexplored are the net gains of the children – what they come in with and what they exit with over the course of the year. Everything reduces down to a score that may not capture the bigger picture of the gains children are making. When asked about what she believes the public values in education, she says that due to what is publicized about schools, including teacher misconduct and cheating, citizens may have a bad taste in their mouths about education. In her view, one bad incident can shift the focus from all of the good things schools are trying to do. When asked about her school in particular, she sees parents as wanting to see their children be successful and to grow, to make gains in areas such a reading that they can see. The parents also want to feel that their children are loved and valued in the school community and that they are able to make friends and have a good school experience socially. The parents want to know that their students will be successful when they move to the next grade level and they look to the school to provide support for any difficulties the students may be facing.

Beyond the school community, it becomes harder to determine public views on education because so many factors come into play at State and national levels. In terms of how politicians are able to approach decisions surrounding education, she thinks that since they make so many promises, it may be difficult for them to actually follow their own beliefs about what education should be. She also has some appreciation for the

enormity of making decisions about education and describes the legislative process as a chipping away at the monolithic structure that is public education. Given that most legislators have very little real experience in educating young people, she seems to see schools as somewhat isolated from the federal decision making progress, saying that schools must often make their own ways where they see need. Even though the policy makers might have the best interests of the schools in mind, she sees education as too big for them to get their heads around, and posits that school might do better to partner with such groups as local universities to develop good practices. In areas such as funding and teacher support, she sees legislators having little real understanding of what is needed, mostly due to a lack of shared experience. When asked where legislators might be receiving information for help the develop legislation, she cites various labor lobby groups such as the NEA or the local lobby. She thinks lawmakers are getting good advice to a point, but says policy makers may be missing out by not talking to campus level workers. In her experience, neither she nor any of her coworkers have been asked for input regarding education policy. During her National Board meetings, she has had the opportunity to speak to groups about needs that schools are facing, but does not know if the information makes an impact outside of these educator groups. She does believe that some groups have consistent access to politicians, but is unsure of the composition of these groups or the messages they are sending to lawmakers. She expressed an awareness that there are probably education hearings at the State capitol that people could attend if they wished, but admitted that she had not seen many notices of such meetings. Given the apparent lack of notice, she felt it would be difficult for the average teacher to attend a hearing.

In turning her attention to the specific legislation of NCLB, Beck feels that policy makers set out to produce a piece of legislation that would support the learning of all children. A primary intent of the law has been to have children reach grade level competence, particularly in reading before they are passed to the next grade. Another goal has been to address the dropout rate in schools and to provide systems where students are encouraged to graduate. Student motivation has been important ad supporting students as they make choices involving future careers is also integral. She also sees the law as encouraging schools to develop systems of interventions to meet the needs of a diverse student population. She admits that she doesn't think legislators fully understood the level of needs that a school such as hers might face, particularly in the area of special education and bilingual education. At the onset of the act, students were asked to pass tests with passing levels set in a way that were developmentally inappropriate for the students. In her experience, it was frightening for children to be tested with a poor instrument and difficult for teachers who were not offered the supports they needed to help their students. Although the school was initially offered money for interventions, which was a much-appreciated new source of aid for the school, she says funding has steadily decreased over the years, while more restrictions are being placed on how the money is used. During this school year, the school will have very little money for crucial after school tutoring. In her estimation, available funds have dropped from about $30,000 to $17, 000. These decreases are in spite of the fact that passing levels for the tests increase each year.

Regarding the effects of the law on a larger scale, Beck believes that children are intimidated by the pressures they face under the standardized testing process. When they enter third grade, they feel scared that they won't pass, and if they fail the first test

administration, they become even more fearful they will not succeed. For teachers, the stress level has increased as well, even though they work together collaboratively to develop the best methods for helping students. It's as if they feel they are unsuccessful if their students don't pass the test. It's also stressful if they have students that did not qualify for special education and resource support and they may not have the help they need for testing. In looking at how NCLB directly affects campus practice, Beck says that the law is everywhere. Since her campus has a large Hispanic population, the school must provide a variety of programs to meet the various language needs of the students. The school must also provide the appropriate special education services for these diverse groups. Adding to the difficulty of meeting student needs is the fact that materials for bilingual speakers may be non-existent or may be delivered to the campus weeks later than English materials. Benchmark tests used by the district to assess student progress towards TAKS do not come in "dropped levels," which are tests given below the student's current grade level, so students may take a test that does not accurately reflect their skill levels. Even when resources are available, the paperwork required to account for how monies are used and how student progress is reported make related administrative and teaching duties onerous. Throughout the year, it's as if the school is under constant scrutiny from the government and is put in the position of constantly proving it is doing the right thing for students. For this administrator, a great part of each day is spent completing paperwork for the great accountability trail. When testing time comes around, she must devote more hours to preparing materials for campus-level administration. She also must account for every student; what interventions they are receiving, what services are being offered to each student so that her school can show it is doing all it can for each student. For her, it feels that the school is being watched for signs of wrongdoing and that there is a lack of trust for educator judgment regarding what

is right for students. In approaching such oversight, she always tries to take into account what is best for children and tries to make decisions accordingly, but she is unable to escape the fact that her job is very much tied to a strict adherence to the law and the accountability embedded in it. Much of the NCLB requirements are sent by the district through emails, and the district may ask for campuses to fulfill obligations under a timeline that puts a great burden campus workers and may force workers to put other important work aside.

In thinking about how the law intersects with her view of education, she sees a commonality in the support for individual students that the law seems to require. She acknowledges that her school does get some vital funding under the law that wasn't available before, but that it could still use more. However, there are some problems that she sees. Foremost is the problem her school had encountered in striving to meet the needs of struggling students in a timely manner, particularly as applied to students in need of special education services. Based on her experiences, she feels that teachers are often asked to gather information or data about a student to the point of overkill, when everyone knows a student needs help, with such data gathering taking valuable time away from potential interventions. This harkens back to her earlier voiced concerns about a lack of trust by central office administrators or governments officials for what teachers are doing. At times in the past, she has had an opportunity to sit in on roundtable planning meetings at central office, but at this point, she is unsure that all of the committee input has had any real effect on district functioning.

Throughout her career in education, Beck has had the opportunity to speak with a variety of people about education issues, but ultimately, she prefers to speak with others

working in education. Typically, she speaks with the school counselor or her principal, and she will talk with certain special education and bilingual teachers as well. These teachers are usually approached because they most closely deal with issues covered under NCLB and IDEA and tend to need administrative support. Additionally intermediate teachers may share more concerns because they are typically preparing students for the TAKS. She will also seek out certain individuals who tend to share her views on education or who share certain duties under the law. When she is away from campus, she tends to share with family members, many of whom work in education. She will talk with others, but deeper conversations tend to occur with those family members working in schools, who are in the trenches and are seeing the same things every day. Through these conversations, she is able to problem solve and get new ideas to take back to her campus or to make sure her campus is doing the right thing regarding district initiatives. When asked about taking concerns to central office or before the school board, she says she would, but she would feel the need to get data to support her view so that she could be adequately prepared to speak. She says that it might be scary, but being prepared would help. She described a recent meeting with other assistant principals that wanted to bring new views to their campuses but were afraid because their principals have different views. In general, she feels that sharing ideas is encouraged at her campus and that her principal is open to inviting others to come to the school to share information. She describes her school as being a leader in sharing ideas and is of the opinion that a group of people could take concerns to central office and be successful. She has a similar response to taking concerns to legislators, with the idea that a group such a teacher union might carry more weight than an individual voice. She does think it is important to get more teachers and administrators to speak to politicians and that educators should take

data to present to legislators to support the good things that schools are doing and to emphasize areas of need.

Carol

Carol was the third administrator to be interviewed. She currently holds a unique position with the school as she mentors students and teaches part-time to provide support for students who have been labeled gifted and also students who may be struggling with TAKS-related reading and writing skills. She has worked in this capacity for about six years. Originally, she taught some classes at the college level while pursuing a degree in English, but eventually made the shift to teaching in public schools. She started with junior and senior level English and taught in the secondary environment for 13 years. Following her secondary tenure, she received a grant to develop writing academies, which were placed in six middle schools in the district. She oversaw this program for about six years when the grant ended. She was then recruited to be the coordinator for the district's gifted and talented program, which she headed for eleven years until her retirement. She has also had three years of consulting with teachers about the needs of gifted students.

When asked about her views on the purposes of education, Carol replies that education helps us to fulfill the potential for who we are; how we are equipped and made ready for the world to the best of our abilities. It is a way of fulfilling individual potential that allows one to take his or her place in the world or larger community. It is skill building and it helps kids to learn to think for themselves and to weigh choices; to become more productive. She cites information from her years in the GT office regarding multiple intelligences, and agrees that students may have many gifts to bring to

a learning environment. Some students may be stronger than others, but all students can contribute and be successful, even in the presence of disability.

When asked where she sees schools being successful, she admits that it is hard for her to generalize. In her experience, her current school is doing good things for children, but when she reads about things in the popular press, she is struck by how backwards the general populace perceives education to be. She admits these views may be coming from some school settings, but it is not her current experience. In this school, she sees education as going beyond a teacher transmitting knowledge to a student and more to the teacher as a holistic facilitator for joint learning with students. As part of a learning community, the student is exposed to more learning and teaching perspectives that teachers absorb from their grade level team members. Compared to her earlier experiences as a secondary teacher working solitarily in a classroom, she sees this collaboration as much more beneficial for teaching and learning. She did have one early experience working with three other teachers in an open classroom, which gave her some insight about what teaching could be about regarding collaboration for strategies and curricula. Another positive direction she sees her school taking is the focus on the student as a whole child, including the teaching of values. At this point in her career, she agrees that she is for the most part working in support of NCLB, but in general, she has no real political agenda for teaching children. It is likely that the ancillary nature of her position places her outside of any direct impact the law might have on educators.

In terms of difficulties schools are facing, she feels that these are great. For her, schools are a microcosm of all the things going on in the larger world and its problems are reflected in the problems schools face. In her experience, children may come without

social skills appropriate for a community setting and have been babysat by television; their imaginations and dreams being stifled. They are inundated with images of violence because that is all they see. Their culture teaches them that an education is only important for making more money or that an education is not even important because one can be a rock or football star. For her, we are educators in a world that does not truly value education; does not believe we should invest time money and effort into it. She admits that teachers tend to see kids as coming in not knowing anything, but teachers accept it is their job to educate them to the best of their potentials. However, a lack of pre-education or cultural training does not create the greatest problem. She feels that the biggest problem is a society that sees education as a means to an end and not an end in itself. A society that emphasizes being upwardly mobile and acquiring things, factors into this along with the belief that these things will buy you comfort and security. Ultimately she believes education has made progress over the past 100 years, but we are now at a place where we need to consider what is being valued in our society, and if education has been reduced to an instrumental enterprise.

She agrees that her view of the purposes of education may not be consistent with the views of the general public. From her perspective, Americans tend to be a pragmatic people who want things to work efficiently and quickly; they want their children to get to college and then become a decent, respectable citizen. For these people, education put forth as a way for students to learn different ways of thinking or seeing the world tends to be a bunch of gobblydegook that is a waste of good money. While she advocates for the value of a liberal education, she understands that students today seem to want an education that provides them with discreet skills that can be utilized in the marketplace. She sees that schools should be concerned about how students do after school, but thinks

performance should be measured in a variety of ways beyond test scores or a paycheck. She does understand the need for testing as it could be used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and drive instruction, but feels that turning a test into a competitive endeavor is detrimental to student learning.

In terms of what policy makers are striving for when addressing education, student performance under a structured system of accountability seems to be a primary goal. However, she says that even beyond student outcomes, legislators are concerned with how much quality education can be gotten for a certain amount of money. She fears that quality has come to be narrowly defined because student success is measured so narrowly under the State systems of standardized tests. Essentially, we are poverty-stricken when it comes to assessing accountability. In general, teachers want to be accountable, but to measure success in one or two snapshots seems ridiculous to her. In thinking about how legislators arrive at a certain policy, she thinks it is hard to get into their heads, but she feels accountability has become a big part of policy without people really understanding what it means or that they feel a test is the only way to determine if schools are being successful. She would caution policy makers that schools have changed so much over the past few decades and that policy should reflect new ideas about teaching and learning and the diversity that is present in most school environments. For her, having lawmakers put in some time in schools might be helpful. They would have to avoid the usual dog and pony shows that can accompany such visits and actually spend some real face time there. It is also important for them to actually become familiar with student work so that they have a better understanding about what is happening in schools. Currently, she believes that they don't listen to teachers very much, and tend to rely mostly on the voices of experts that have the ear of policy makers

In terms of NCLB, she believes it to be a political ploy. On the surface it seems to be a law that asks us to pay attention to all children, and not just some of them. However, a few years later, it has been reduced to a slogan that fronts an unfunded mandate. We now have more ways to test, but not more ways to teach children, which for her is a very narrow approach to education. If we really meant NCLB, we would have the best schools in the world, but this is clearly not so. She admits that it seems cliché, but we are really narrowing education by teaching to the test. At times it might be appropriate to teach to a test, but in general what does the test mean for a child? Does it mean he or she is ready for college or a job? In her view this narrowing of education ultimately will narrow a child's ability to perform. In terms of how well NCLB intersects with her beliefs, she feels they are running on parallel tracks, especially when the future direction of education is taken into account.

Carol does have a strong circle of people she talks with about these and other issues in education. She spends a great deal of time talking with the school principal about initiatives being introduced by the district. She also has a group of friends who are former educators and they get together to talk about what they see to be critical issues facing education. Her friends are despondent at times about the direction things are taking, but they feel that ultimately, good teachers find ways to be subversive. Always, a good teacher is looking at the eyes of the kid for what direction to take and will seek to meet those needs despite the demands of the test, and despite that monies are wasted when they might be funneled towards innovative learning environments. She laments that so much effort and money goes into developing tests and more tests when this effort could go to educating the whole child. She doesn't know how education can get out of

the box where testing systems perpetuate themselves, especially when it has become a multi-million dollar business. On occasion, she will bring these concerns to those outside of education, particularly to members of her church, and she feels comfortable talking with almost anyone, despite the negative attitudes she perceives to be held by some community members regarding education. Additionally, she would be fine in going to the school board with concerns, but she feels such concerns should be presented very specifically, and not something like "we are testing too much". In order to make her point, she agrees it would be necessary to collect data or evidence and to organize her point in order to advance her argument. Based on past experiences, she has learned that to approach the school board without hard data including numbers and anecdotal information is a fruitless experience. Because school board members are elected, it is in their interest to listen to what is going on in schools, but we have to be very focused when we want change. At times, she will also write to her senators (not House members) if an important piece of legislation is coming up. With the reauthorization of NCLB coming up in 2007, she believes it to be important for lawmakers to take apart the law and examine it for parts that legitimately need improvement. Over the past few years, she feels that the law has contributed to a lack of trust by teachers in regard to NCLB aiding education as had originally been promised.

Chapter Five: The Results of Interviews with Teachers

Teachers who were interviewed for this study were chosen for their years of experience and for the variety of ways in which they contribute to the campus. They were also chosen because they work in positions that would most likely expose them to directives coming out of NCLB. As in the previous chapter, each teacher has been provided with a section where the responses to their interview have been recounted. Interview protocols from Appendices A and B were used to guide the interviews. Maxie is a special education inclusion teacher, Sara is a former fourth grade teacher and current language arts coach and gifted and talented teacher and Robert teaches first grade and has many years of experience with primary level education. Sammie has taught several different grades and works as a math coach for students needing more support. Tiffany has also taught for many years and is a reading and dyslexia specialist on the campus. She typically works with struggling readers at TAKS grade levels. Maggie is a bilingual teacher with years of experience at several grade levels. In the following chapter, each educator will give his or her thoughts on NCLB, the purposes of education and the potential for connection with those who make education law.

Sammie

Sammie is a math support specialist and teacher for the elementary school. She has eighteen years of total teaching experience at fourth and third grades and in her current position as an instructional specialist. She has been awarded the campus teacher of the year for excellence in teaching, which for her has special meaning. Most of her

teaching assignments now involve working with groups of five to fifteen students in fourth and fifth grades to improve their math skills and ultimately prepare them to pass TAKS. Her teaching experience has come from working in her current urban district and in schools in the Texas valley region.

Regarding the purposes of education, Sammie places importance on how education can serve to make students better people. It's not only about academics, it's about the whole person, about getting friends, being a good citizen, learning to work independently and reaching their goals they have set for themselves. Education lets them know what they can accomplish. Although she loves math, for her, education is about much more than the subject and more about addressing the whole child in the context of family and community. Even when you might have 22 kids in the classroom, the teacher must look at each one individually. When she considers what schools are doing well, she points to how her own school strives to create a learning community that supports students. She says it hasn't always been this way, but now teachers will reach out to help students, even if they don't have those particular students in a class. In her position as a support teacher, she has the opportunity to interact with a variety of students that she views as "hers" even though she doesn't work with them all day. Instructionally, she doesn't feel that everything is driven by TAKS, that her school tries to do the best for students regardless of the test. She also sees her position as a support for other teachers by offering new teaching ideas and by providing small groups support that allows certain students to shine. She feels that the small groups help them to be more comfortable in learning subjects that may be difficult for them and she is proud that her school is willing to try different things to help children succeed. Her principal is cited as an integral force

in supporting teacher autonomy and innovation in deciding what instructional strategies will work best for children.

When asked about where schools are currently facing the greatest difficulties, she describes all of the hats teachers must wear and notes that the variety of needs that teachers must meet today are ever increasing. Now in her eighteenth year, she sees difficult home lives as having a great effect on students and worries that teachers are not prepared to face what students are bringing to school. Although teachers might want to help, the problems are so large and the level of intervention required too overwhelming for educators. She does welcome the challenge, but worries if she can be successful in meeting student needs. Her views are not much different from those of her family members, many of whom worked in education. Outside of her family, she does have friends that she talks with about education, and because they choose to send their kids to public schools, she feels that are trusting public schools to do the best for children.

In her opinion, a real divide exists between what she believes to be educator perceptions of education and policy maker perception of education. For her, it doesn't seem as if policy makers really know what is going on in schools and they haven't seen how difficult things are now and how much has changed since they were in school. Such things as an increased awareness of the presence of family violence in student homes and a greater identification of disabilities, some very severe, has taxed the current system. When they introduce a huge law like NCLB, it becomes very difficult for lawmakers to understand the ultimate effects such a law could have on practice. Unfortunately, she believes that lawmakers make no real attempt to talk with teachers about what is going on in schools. In eighteen years, no one has approached her for her views and she has seen

very little if any overtures made to coworkers. She admits it is possible they are talking to teachers, but maybe not in great enough numbers or in diverse enough groups to mirror the various types of school districts scattered across the State.

In looking at the intent of NCLB, it is possible that lawmakers created the law with the intent of meeting the needs of all students; of creating equal education for all. She takes some exception to the title of the law and questions where policy makers got the idea that educators are leaving children behind. When she applies these thoughts to her campus, she sees educators as being successful in reaching the school's diverse group children, and speaks of her school as being "perfect" in its efforts to reach all children. As seen through her eyes, NCLB is limiting despite its broad scope. For her there are so many possible ways to reach children, and children working at so many different levels, that a law that dictates limited methods for instruction and assessment will fall short of its promise. Some students will always need types of interventions that all outside of the dictates of what the law provides and may not pass the assessments that the law requires. This harkens back to her belief that educator must look the whole child and at individual strengths and weaknesses and not just blanket remedies to help students.

With the advent of the NCLB, Sammie sees the students as being under much more stress. She thinks back to when she was in school and describes testing as being very different then. At that time, students might take a test on a given day, but no real discussion was ever had regarding test performance and no time was spent in the class specifically preparing for the test. The only thing she worried about was bringing two number two pencils. For her, no importance was attached to the test, and her parents never received any report of her scores. In the present, students are very much aware that

they must pass the test to advance from certain grade levels. The kids just know too much about the test and it stresses them out. While she feels for what the students are going through, she admits that the law has not really changed how she approaches education. Whether the law exists or not, she feels it is her job to do the right thing for kids. She doesn't worry about the law or the test, she just worries about what she can do for that child for that year. She does feel some stress to help students succeed, but it hasn't changed how she approaches her job. In general, she does not agree with what the law is doing, but again, she really doesn't spend much time thinking about the law. She has always known she wanted to teach and seems to hold some deeper allegiance to what she feels to be best teaching practices whether they coincide with the law or not. Maybe in some sense she sees the law as impersonal while what she does is strongly connected to students at a human level.

When Sammie wants to talk with others about education, she tends to rely on peer teachers and her principal, who she sees as "one of us." In her view, most of the campus staff holds similar beliefs. In her group of friends, she is the only educator, so she doesn't tend to take education concerns to them. When asked about reaching out to people beyond her intimate groups, she says that she would feel uncomfortable doing so because she would not really know whom to contact. She also feels that her personality is not such that she would feel comfortable speaking in a political forum. She also says she is not really aware of people who tend to speak before the board, so she is not sure how such action is met by district administrators. At one time, school board members came to their school for a ceremony and she didn't really feel the need to approach them about concerns. The district does communicate its concerns about the law to its educators, but tends to do so by email so it is a one-way communication. The local union

might communicate some shared views, but she does not actively seek them out for discussion. In looking to contact politicians, she was adamant that she would not write to one on her own, but if another teacher was gathering information to send to a lawmaker, she might add something to the message.

Tiffany

The next teacher interviewed, Tiffany, serves as a dyslexia and reading specialist for the campus. She also works to teach reading to small groups of children who have been identified as having trouble with reading. At this time, most of her students are drawn from bilingual classes at non-testing and testing grade levels. Before coming to her current school, Tiffany worked at schools in Florida, and entered education through an emergency certification program. Her first assignments involved working with third and fifth grade inner-city kids. These students were from all over the world, which served to broaden her perspective regarding the needs that children may bring to a school. She then transitioned in to the job of educational specialist where she guided students in a peer counseling program. This particular program was in eight middle schools, two high schools and four elementary schools and targeted children of migrant workers. She was responsible for monitoring attendance and behavior of these students. continued to do pullout language arts classes for elementary students. In addition, she oversaw after school programs for identified students and helped with credit recovery for migrant students. She also helped parents to advocate for their students. These experiences covered six years. When she moved to her current State, she started teaching fourth grade and became familiar with the standardized testing system that was touted by State leaders. When she moved to her current school, she was hired as a reading specialist, and has focused on reading instruction for the past few years. During the summers, she

works with high school students in summer reading programs, so her teaching experience tends to span the years covered by public education. In addition, she works with the district office to train teachers how to screen for dyslexia and does parent training to educate them about their children and dyslexia.

Upon being asked about the purposes of education, she thinks for a minute and then remarks that preparation for a career, for life are important. It is important for kids to learn to read well, and she sees that students who struggle academically tend not to land some of the easier or higher-paying jobs. She hopes that education is able to find some avenues for kids who do struggle so that they can have more choices for their futures. She finds it hard to say that education as a public enterprise is doing well based on the negative press she encounters, but she feels that her school is doing good things for children, especially those kids who usually fall through cracks. She attributes this success to the amount of support staff present on the campus, which aids in monitoring individual student progress and planning interventions. She does not see this level of intervention happening at all campuses, possibly because principals may make different decisions about how to apply staffing monies. She feels lucky that her principal spends money to hire the necessary people for the campus. When she compares her experience to schools across the country, she is not sure what other schools are doing to help students.

In terms of ongoing problems in education, she cites the increasingly overwhelming demands placed on teachers as being foremost in her mind. In fact, she would not recommend the job of teaching to others because she feels it is so labor intensive. She sees the job as being very stressful and describes the time, energy,

expertise and professionalism teachers bring to their jobs, while being compensated very little. She compares teaching to other jobs and says that people could go elsewhere for fewer hours and more money. With current compensation levels, the American Dream is beyond the average teacher. Additionally, the long hours take away from time spent with family members; essentially if one chooses teaching, teaching often becomes one's life. Teachers dedicate so much of themselves to the job that their families may suffer and she feels that teachers can break under the pressure. When asked about ongoing difficulties teachers face in everyday practice, she talks about working with students who are bringing in distractions from outside of the school. Essentially, these students may not be ready to learn and it takes away from other students who are ready to learn. She says that we have staff members to remove kids and address certain problems, but there can be so many issues faced in a school each day. Teachers more and more are expected to be experts in dealing with a variety of student issues, and some teachers are good at meeting these needs and some teachers need more support or experience.

The public view of education seems to present a mixed message. If one considers some news reports, one sees that teachers are underpaid and seem to garner some sympathy from the public until salaries are compared to other jobs and teachers don't seem to be doing so badly. Another topic that makes the news is student progress in reading. For Tiffany, low scores simply mean that we are not teaching reading the way it needs to be done. She cites kids being passed on without being able to read and says that this is everyone's fault – parents, teachers, anyone who knew the student had problems. In her experience, people are slow to accept fault for children being unable to read. Each group, parents, teachers and politicians tend to point the finger at each other.

When asked to consider the intent of education law, she immediately connects NCLB to reading improvement. She recites the idea that all third graders must pass reading tests to advance, but does not know if all children can pass a single test, because they lack certain opportunities or bring outside difficulties to school. Every child who can't read has a personal story of why this has come to be and NCLB has helped educate teachers to consider these different reasons for reading difficulties, but the scope of the law drops off after fifth or sixth grade and students are left without many of the supports they enjoyed in elementary school. When she talks with secondary teachers, they have children who are struggling to read, but now the onus of learning is placed on the student, and they either get it or they don't. When asked about the purpose of NCLB specifically, she feels it was created to improve graduation rates of students and to improve chances of post public school success. In regard to the input that was used to create the law, she believes that policy makers used statistical data such as test scores on exit level tests and dropout rates to determine areas of focus for the law. In looking at how graduates were faring, policy makers were determined to put laws into place that would insure young students were academically prepared to graduate.

A successful area under the law includes how teachers are now approaching reading. Teachers have become more knowledgeable about using different instructional strategies and identifying students who are struggling. At her school, they are seeing real success in improving student reading levels. Assessment plays an important point in identifying areas of difficulty and driving appropriate instruction. Teachers use the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), but introducing its use has been a gradual process because teachers need to be trained in its use and must have time to do the actual assessments with classes of students. For her, the law has helped create an environment

where people are developing good assessments that teachers can use to help students at earlier grade levels. In her own experience, she has seen the support for new teachers greatly increase, along with an explosion of materials for instruction and assessment of reading. Now more materials exist that can be used with children at many levels. In terms of her own practice, she sees the main influence of NCLB as providing her with the opportunity to receive training and employment as a master reading teacher. Overall though, she doesn't seem to feel the effects of the law. She acknowledges that she does certain assessments required under the law, but says that she would tend to use the assessments anyway because they provide some valuable information. Conversely, it may be true that some teachers would not display the same attitude because of the amount of work it takes to administer and analyze assessments.

Considering her views of education in light of NCLB, she feels that there is some connection with her elementary experiences regarding the emphases on reading and preparing kids for the future whether it be college or a certain type of career. However, she is unsure of the same focus extends to middle and high schools. As academic expectations become more difficult, students receive less help, but have greater expectations for learning placed on them. She is unsurprised that that we lose kids at the secondary level. She worries that we become so intent on getting them to the next level that we forget to support them in times of need whether is due to immaturity or disability. Maybe older students continue to need more explicit instruction about how to do the business of school in order to graduate. Possibly schools could put intensive intervention programs in place to guide students in this way to meet developmental needs that continue after elementary school.

In thinking about whom she tends to share education views with, Tiffany tends to look towards her fellow support teachers for their insights. She also feels very comfortable talking with the principal and assistant principal about school concerns. Whom she approaches usually depends on the type of information she is seeking. Outside of campus, she often works with the Section 504 office because she is familiar with them through her work with dyslexia. She also will talk with fellow reading specialists. There is also a close friend who works in another school district who is asked to share ideas about educating children including what is going on in different districts. She usually doesn't talk with people outside of education because she equates bringing up education in conversation to bringing up politics or religion; one doesn't do it unless one is ready for an argument. Also the fact that outsiders don't understand what education is really about or tend to think that teaching is easy keeps her from talking. She would say her personality tends to keep her away from politicized discussions.

Along these lines, she has never felt the need to talk at a school board meeting. She concedes that she sees others as knowing more about a given subject than she does and she tends to leave the talking to them. When her friends speak at the school board meetings, she thinks they get some satisfaction, but she wouldn't choose to do the same. However, in general, she sees sharing as being encouraged at her campus and within special group meetings she attends. When information about NCLB is sent to campus level educators, it is typically sent through email and teachers are not expected to reply to such missives. Admittedly, the information appears to be diluted into a form that simply asks teachers to perform a certain set of tasks that supports school compliance of NCLB, but Tiffany admits her principal allows for some instructor autonomy in deciding how the requests found in these communications will be addressed by the campus.

In looking back, Tiffany is clear that her school is doing a good job and that she is very happy to work there, but she is unsure she would want to move to another school environment. In her view, everyone on a campus has a rough job, with many responsibilities, and she wishes policy makers could truly understand what school staff members do. She jokes that having "School Survivor" with politicians might open eyes to what educators face and thinks very few would be able to handle what teachers routinely face every day.

Sarah

Sarah currently works as a language arts specialist and teacher for the school. She also heads the Gifted and Talented committee and is responsible for helping teachers identify students in addition to working with groups of previously identified students to provide enrichment activities. A veteran teacher, this is her 37th year, and she has worked with 4th, 5th and 6th grades during her tenure and has been closely involved in preparing students for standardized tests. With her many years of experience to inform her, she doesn't hesitate to respond when asked about the purposes of education. For her, the most important aspect of educating children involves developing within them a lifelong love of learning. She describes the large amount of material students must take in before graduation, but is clear on the point that there is so much to know in today's world, we must never quit learning, whether its to meet the demands of a job, the family or hobbies. She sees lifelong learning as keeping an individual more interesting and keeping them current with their job requirements. Also, staying educated allows one to pass information on to children, so learning becomes generational, and the emotional, social and intellectual needs of new learners can be addressed.

Unfortunately, she believes schools are failing at instilling this desire to learn. She acknowledges that schools have children for a limited amount of time, and may be unable to address all of the needs students are bringing to school. In her view, it is important that schools have the support of parents in the education process and that parents need to shoulder some of the responsibility for teaching children. She sees a need for parents to have interactions with their children about values and to develop some kind of game plan for the future of their children, especially in their younger years before they go into middle school. She also emphasizes that education should be a community partnership, with churches and other community-based organizations taking responsibility for meeting the needs of students. When asked about ongoing dilemmas facing schools, she points to parents who may not value education or did not complete their own education and have few resources to work with students. She worries that in our current societal climate, instilling a value for education and learning may not be a part of the agenda some parents have for their children. Making explicit expectations for graduation from high school and the pursuit of post secondary learning would be part of this support. She sees schools bending over backwards to meet these unfulfilled needs, with teachers, counselors and parent support specialists all working to make contact with parents about the progress of their children. Sometimes, she thinks that schools make it too easy for parents to shift the burden of supporting children onto the schools, and believes that schools should have high expectation for parents, much like we have in place for students. She strongly believes that students will rise to meet higher expectations and cites the case of her daughter, who in spite of having a disability, graduated with honors and has pursued two degrees.

Sarah takes a minute to consider what the public may actually understand about what schools are trying to do, and admits that parents may not understand very much at all. She thinks most people consider themselves experts because they went through school at some point in the past, but for Sarah, schooling has changed considerably over the past ten or fifteen years. If a person is volunteering in a school, they might see some of what is going on, but for the general public, it seems that little of the good work that schools do is making the public news. She believes that the negative reports about education that seems to permeate the news have contributed to a low public opinion of schools. She believes this lack of true understanding extends to policy makers as well. She says it is difficult to make good laws about education when lawmakers have not worked in education. What might look good on paper does not necessarily translate into good practice. When asked about who lawmakers are listening to when they create policies, she says that they should be listening to teachers from all levels PK through 12, but feels they are not receiving this kind of input. Since they don't get this kind of input, she fears that lawmakers don't really have a sense of the developmental needs of children so they are unable to tailor expectations to effectively meet these needs. She also worries that the current push towards academic models and the exclusion of developmental models of educating children may leave certain needs unmet and may not address the fact that different children may have different learning needs as a result of developmental issues. She is not sure that a one size fits all policy can work in schools.

No Child Left Behind may purport to meet the needs of all children, but she sees some elementary children being bypassed, especially those students who achieve at a high level. These students do not tend to receive the challenges they need academically since most of a school's resources tend to be spent on struggling students, leaving high

achievers in the cold. Additionally, there is little legislation to support meeting the needs of advanced students at lower grade levels. When asked about which students groups NCLB targets, she says students performing in the middle. However, after a few minutes, she admits that most of the school resources available tend to go towards the lowest performing students. Basically, if students can pass a test they are fine. Since so much money is spent on remediation, she worries that students who are capable do not receive the support they need to be the future leaders of our country. As a nation we may be missing out on renewing our brain pool that contributes to innovation in industry and government.

When she considers the effects of NCLB on practice, she says that teachers are being required to differentiate more for struggling students, a requirement that may be difficult for teachers working with large classes and many needs. She has doubts that one teacher can effectively meet these needs, which in her view have become more severe during the past few years. She admits that the intent of the law seems good and that it probably looks good on paper, but that it puts a huge burden on educators to meet so many needs and to supply so many resources including time, money, materials, staff and facilities. In looking at these difficulties, she also feels that the law misses out by neglecting the developmental needs of students. The title itself, No Child Left Behind, invites images of a daunting task – where does one begin in saving all of the children? What are our expectations for all children, including those with severe disabilities served through life skills? She also feels that the law is so broad that it doesn't really provide any answers for meeting diverse student needs. However, because of the nature of her job she tends to work in direct support of the law. She has some autonomy in deciding strategies for teaching, but since she must prepare students for standardized testing, there

are certain parts of the job that are dictated, with formal communications about testing preparations coming in the form of district emails.

When Sarah needs to talk about issues in education, she tends to turn to other teachers who have similar experiences. She values their perspectives because they bring a realistic understanding to any discussions and do not tend to be influenced by idealistic thinking. Outside of school, she will speak with ex-teachers, but does not typically talk to people outside of education because they do not understand what is going on in schools. She cites the misguided belief that those outside of education have about going into teaching because it is an easy job and says that very few of these people tend to last. They don't tend to realize hot many things are going on in a class. She also admits that she would not speak to district administrators at a school board meeting and seems to be leery of having her name known in that context. She is unsure that anything bad would happen to her, but is adamant about not speaking in that venue. In part, she feels that nothing would come out of speaking before the board. When she considers people speaking at the meetings, she feels that speaking tends to be guarded, so that board members may not get the full picture of what is going on in schools. At the campus level, she sees people being very comfortable with sharing and says that this is vital for meeting the needs of all students. On her campus she experiences an environment where sharing is part of the philosophy of the school. At the campus, since educators have the same experiences, sharing is more natural, but when people move to different levels at central office, they lose a feeling for what is going on in the classroom. She described her daughter's college where all staff members rotated in and out of the classroom which gave them insight into teaching issues. Along these lines she believes that lawmakers

should spend a certain amount of time in a classroom to get an idea about what a teacher might face in meeting the needs of a certain group of students.

Maxie

Maxie is a special education teacher who works with fifth grade students in an inclusion classroom. She has been in education off and on since 1966. She started out teaching high school history and government in a district outside of the largest city in the State, and she moved to her current city when she followed her husband there. She continued working at the high school level for the next few years, teaching history. As she worked with more students she became aware of the needs that students were bringing to the classroom, and that even at high school, she was faced with students who could not read. These problems continued to stay with her as she traveled to Washington to work with then Senator Yarborough on the bill that eventually became IDEA, the landmark law supporting the needs of students with disabilities in schools. Since she worked in the press department, she types much of the law, and as she read it, she began to see the students she had encountered at her prior assignment in its words. She became very interested in learning disabilities and when they moved back to her home State, she began working in a class designed for special needs students. There were thirteen students with a range of severe needs in the class. She worked in this setting for two years and received her special education certification during that time. When her family moved back to her current town, she spent time with special education students at secondary and elementary levels and at that point had accrued twenty years of experience in teaching. She took a long break where she spent some time working with children and adult suffering from heads traumas in a horseback riding treatment program, and has just

returned to teaching in the last three years where she has worked as both a resource and inclusion teacher.

Given her diverse experiences in education, she has had the opportunity to think about the purposes of education at many different levels. She considers education to be one of the greatest things this country offers to its citizens – that everyone has the right to a free education. She also speaks glowingly of the advancement of education law to meet the needs of more children in our country as being important to its development. In terms of how this contributes to the functioning of our country, she sees education as contributing to making a true democracy work for us. That education is public is vital and she sees it as being somewhat tragic that certain people have abandoned public education for private schooling. For her, it is important that people running for public office have their kids in public schools so they have a better understanding of what is going on in the schools. She also sees that we have expanded the meaning of education to meet the needs of a diverse population, including our most disabled. In the past, these students would not have benefited from public school support and they would have been shuffled to the side, probably in some isolated part of campus where they did not come into contact with other students. She remembers her first teaching assignment where she worked with students that most likely had learning disabilities, and admits that she had no real idea how to approach these student and no supports in meeting their needs.

When asked about successes in education, she believes that schools are doing a great deal to meet the diverse needs students present to them. In looking back over her career, she can see that schools have made steady improvements in meeting student needs despite a noticeable increase in severity and diversity of identified need. Although

schools may not be meeting all student needs, they are putting forth effort. Student-teacher ratios are better in special education that helps with meeting needs. In her district, schools are moving towards inclusion, which has been more effective in her view than the previously unsuccessful mainstreaming. However, she does offer a caveat, saying that it is unrealistic to expect that the needs of all special education students can be met through inclusion and calls for schools consider settings that are in the best interests of the individual student when providing a placement.

When she considers ongoing challenges faced by schools, she cites testing as being particularly problematic, especially as it impacts special education programming. While agreeing that accountability is crucial, she questions how the concept is applied in public schools. On the positive side, she feels that special education curricula is being more aligned with regular classroom curricula, which helps to ensure academic rigor and consistency for all students. On the down side, she laments the push toward all students taking a single standardized test, a test that might not adequately measure what a student knows or address a current level of functioning. Although we have modifications for testing administration, she laughs to think how difficult it might be for a student with a learning disability have a math test read to them when they are struggling to understand how to do the calculations. It seems the opportunity for confusion would be present in these testing circumstances, even when students have practiced testing with oral administrations. She fears that if we continue to go down the road towards everyone receiving the same test, students will fail, and that an insistence on this by legislators indicates a lack of understanding about what schools and students do. It's not that students can't achieve, it's just that there should be some recognition that students may achieve at different levels and along different timelines. Additionally, students may be

able to overcome some difficulties, but they still may not fit into legislated slots of achievements and may be doomed to failure. From a personal standpoint, she admits to having trouble with standardized tests and wishes that we could have more discretion in measuring student achievement. She thinks that over the course of time, we may be able to tinker with the law to make it more refined in meeting students needs, but given current trends, she is unsure that such changes would be likely. Given the push to report achievement data and the way in which data is cited, she despairs that students who show progress, but do not pass the test receive no recognition, and that schools who raise student achievement without raising passing rates are still seen as ineffective. For a grade such as third grade where passing the reading test is equated with advancement to the next grade level, she criticizes a system that bases such decisions on one snapshot instrument.

In considering public perceptions about education, she sees a concern about the testing and whether it is too much a part of education. She also sees the public as having a view that teaching is a relatively easy job with cushy hours even though people might also say that they would never consider teaching because it could be hard to do. Although people acknowledge the difficult of teaching, they may be unwilling to pay taxes required to support all of the programs schools must provide for students today. They want teachers to be paid well and students to receive a good education, but they don't want to subsidize these things. People believe they understand education because they were schooled and they have opinions based on these experiences, but they may not understand what schools currently face. In the public venue, education in very much a political endeavor, but she questions how much is accomplished when this huge issue is reduced to a few short catchphrases. In her opinion, the reality of what goes on in

education is not understood by the majority of the public. She feels it would be important for people such as the governor and the current Education Secretary Margaret Spellings to make extended visits to schools to really understand what schools are facing and what students are bringing to schools. Without such personal knowledge, it becomes hard to make laws that work at the practitioner level.

In returning to the idea of education being a political enterprise, she agrees that lawmakers are influenced by a variety of interest when they create laws. Although NCLB has been a focus of the Bush administration, she questions whether the government has provided the funding schools require to put in place all of the programs necessary to help students succeed under the law. If the law is so important, why are the resources not available? She feels that when political offices are at stake, lawmakers are loathe to raise taxes to fund programs. Ultimately, she sees policy makers asking schools to do meet diverse student needs without giving them the tools to be successful. She does believe that lawmakers approach education experts for opinions on what to include in laws. The Department of Education has input, but she is unsure how much of this input represents the classroom teacher. It is hard to argue against a law that purports to leave no children behind, but Maxie fears that its inflexibility may ultimately cause more problems for educators and students. In considering the push for inclusion, she worries that it is being used as part of the one size fits all model of accountability in education that does not truly meet the diverse needs of special education students. That Margaret Spellings has dictated some very strict guidelines for how and when these students are served is problematic, and Maxie questions how Ms. Spellings is able to make such decisions given her lack of exposure to the classroom. Maxie is not sure the law is in the best interest of all students and calls the law, at least in part, a numbers game and a

money game, where the administration wants to tout the success of the law without really working to understand how the law is impacting education. She worries that we may phase out needed programs for special needs students to achieve a certain look on paper.

In theory, she sees the law as a success in that it calls for us to address the needs of all students, but questions that all children should be expected to meet the same standard. She has some problems with the testing, but acknowledges the needs for some type of assessment to determine student progress. She is unsure about what this different kind of accountability might look like. It is a concern that student achievement on special education tests pushes teachers to move students over to the regular education test, but she feels there is not a direct comparison for achievement on these tests. Passing levels for the special education tests are very broad compared to the regular test, and a student that is designated a successful on one test might bomb the second. It is a worry that student success on special education tests may be influencing lawmakers to push for a single test for all. She admits that the math test is close on both test versions, but it is still not quite as rigorous. Regarding practice, she believes the law has driven changes in the structural setup of the job with the push for inclusion. She fears since her time is spent in the inclusion room she may not be meeting the needs of students in other fifth grade classrooms. She also senses that students in the inclusion room may experience some embarrassment when they receive remedial instruction in front of peers. She has also seen wonderful learning opportunities happen for included students and she is interested to see how the class evolves. Another area of concern involves the increased difficulty in admitting students to special education, and feels that it has become some sort of numbers issue where the individual student needs are considered less than how many students a particular school or district had identified. She believes the students are still

there, they are just not being identified so maybe all teachers should have special education training to address these unidentified students.

When Maxie needs to talk with others about practice, she typically talks with other teachers, but admits that she is so busy she doesn't talk with them very often. When she does need to share, she feels comfortable doing so. She also has some friends outside of education she speaks with and will use her husband as a sounding board. She is hesitant when asked about speaking to central office staff members or speaking at a board meeting. She has never really thought of doing this, so she says it would need to be a special topic for her to do so. Given her experiences working with government officials, she would feel comfortable writing letters to them about her concerns. She says that she is comfortable speaking with her special education supervisor and feels this person is supportive. Most of the information she receives regarding NCLB and its implementation comes from central office in the form of district emails or special training sessions. She feels that she had little autonomy in working under the law because special education is dictated by legal documentation and schools must strictly uphold IEP requirements.

Robert

Robert is a first grade teacher, with 28 years of experience in teaching. He began teaching in another large city in the State and worked there for four years. He then moved to another district where he taught for 17 years. Before moving into his current assignment, he spent time as an instructor in the district's professional development academy. In order to meet the needs of his students more effectively, he has earned certifications in English as a Second Language and in Reading Instruction. While he

worked in his first position, he received a master's degree in bilingual and bicultural studies. While living in his current city he added a master's degree in curriculum development and went on to earn a doctorate in curriculum development as well. He has been a campus teacher of the year for several years, was awarded the National Presidential Award in Mathematics for his State in 1990, and received a teaching recognition award from the local PBS network. Robert has also completed all the requirements for National Board Certification and has been part of that program since 2000, currently serving as a district facilitator for National Board programs. Continuing education has always been a personal goal for him and he feels this important both in terms of serving students and in working with fellow educators to improve methods of practice.

In considering his personal views on education, he states that he has come to see education as helping students make a place in the world, and preparing them to continue being learners so that they are successful in future pursuits. He feels education is important in preparing students to make their own decisions about their lives and how they will handle themselves as adults. When asked about what we are doing to achieve these things, he answers that schools seems to be trying to provide students with information and skills they can apply to real world situations. The use of technology as a tool is an area where he sees schools striving to prepare students for the future. In terms of facing difficulties in educating children, he describes the variety of problems that students bring to school every day. He says that some things have changed for the better; in the past, if students failed, they were out of school, and no real effort was made to address their needs. Now schools must address a variety of issues. These problems may include a lack of basic experiences or skills that would normally encourage success in

school or basic ideas about what school is and how one acts in a school setting. He attributes this change to thinking that has shifted from this is someone else's problem to this could be my child; in effect, we are placing more importance on the needs of each individual child. We have become a more global society and have come to recognize that there are diverse needs that must be met in a quickly changing world. What was once normal in a homogeneous population no longer applies to today's society.

In terms of consistency between his views and the views of the general public, he cites a body of research on public perceptions of school functioning. When people talk about the school their children attend, they tend to speak favorably about the school, but may rate unknown schools as not being very successful. He attributes these biases to a general lack of understanding by the public about what is going on in schools. He also mentions the idea that much of what is presented in the press, including statistics about testing, paints an unflattering picture of public schooling. He would argue that teachers feel positive about the successes they are seeing but the public is not privy to these experiences. The public may make judgments, but probably doesn't have the information necessary to make goods decisions about school performance.

Along these lines, he believes that law makers are trying to make good decisions about education law, but do not have enough of an understanding about education practice to consider all of the repercussions of their laws. As an example of this lack of understanding, he cites the increase in the number of programs needed to meet the needs of students under the law without the law making provisions for the extra time and staffing needed to carry out such programs. At this point, schools have to take away from something else to meet these new dictated programs. In the instance of testing, a system

of accountability has been put in place without any consideration for how a school must shift programs and resources to provide support for the testing. When asked about where lawmakers receive their information they use to create laws, he is unsure. He does have some sense that maybe one legislator gets an idea and then petitions others to get on the bandwagon without really talking with people in the field to get other perspectives about what happens in the classroom. When asked about who might take part in a congressional hearing, he says that union people would probably show up, but it might be difficult for the average person to know when hearings take place. He cited an example of our district superintendent being invited to speak before the State legislature about the importance of National Board Certification for teaching. He was slated to speak in the afternoon, but did not speak until late into the night, and then to legislators who appeared to not be listening to what he had to say. Here was a person with lots of experience who didn't get a chance to inform policy makers about an important topic because of the nature of how the legislative process works.

In terms of NCLB, he admits that he doesn't really know much about the law. In thinking back, he cannot remember any in-services on the topic offered by the district. In fact, he doesn't remember any time they have sat down as a campus to discuss an education law. They do receive discreet bits of information that directly reference the daily teaching experience and he gives a recent example of the school being asked to monitor the food students consume at school so that healthy choices can be promoted. In his experience, typically one person goes to get the information and then passes it on to teachers, so that the original intent or wording becomes diluted. Teachers get the bottom line, but they may not get the theory or philosophy driving the law. Directives are often sent through district emails or as part of campus trainings, both of which serve to dilute

the message of the law. This is somewhat troublesome, because not everyone takes emails as seriously as they should be taken, so information may not be getting to people that need it the most. Given this disconnect from the original source of the law, he feels that he may not know as much about the law as he should. Since he works with first grade, he is not directly impacted by the standardized testing system and feels that he may know less than other teachers on campus. In general he doesn't feel he understands the full scope of the law, but he does feel that the pressures experienced by the testing grade teachers are starting to flow down to teachers in the primary grades. At this point, they are expected to assess students several times over the course of the year, and the scores on these assessments are recorded in district data banks to track student progress and interventions offered. He says that teachers are feeling some stress if students are not successful over the course of the year.

When asked about the influence of NCLB on practice, he admits that his State is probably ahead of the game. It has had a strong system of accountability in place for many years, and test scores have been made available to the public since the current testing system was put in place. Everywhere the public seems aware of the place that testing has taken in the education process and that schools are being evaluated based on these test scores. He does think that most people tend to pay more attention to their own schools, but the public posting of test results may make education a more global experience. He also says that schools have come to use test scores to make decisions about student learning, but cautions schools must be careful to create an environment that is collaborative rather than punitive so teachers feel comfortable about having scores with both positive and negative outcomes examined by their peers. For him this is a powerful way of using data to improve instruction and he encourages schools to work towards

building learning communities that facilitate this level of collaboration. On the flip side, of using test results as a positive means for driving instruction, he fears that some teachers or campuses spend too much time teaching directly to the test and says we must be careful not to limit instruction only to tested subjects. Based on his earlier thoughts, he concedes that NCLB also pushes schools not to give up on difficult students; students who in the past would have been pushed to the side by schools. Now it is a big deal to meet the needs of all students and having student data being made public raises the awareness of schools regarding serving these students.

If Robert has concerns about education, he does not tend to think about contacting politicians; in fact he sees himself as not being very political. At the campus level, he feels very comfortable talking with his principal and knows that he could affect changes on campus through working with her. He has also seen successful programs on his campus spread to other campuses, so he is confident that collaboration at the grassroots level can lead to changes in practice. In his words he would probably be more comfortable in modeling good practices than acting in an overtly political fashion. On his particular campus, he enjoys an atmosphere that has been created by the faculty and administrators to facilitate sharing ideas. He acknowledges that it may be hard to bring about change, particularly when working with teachers who have many successful years of experience, but believes through subtle steps, most people on his campus are on board with the direction practice is taking. For him, the need to be open to new practices is not that the old practices are bad, it's just that students have changed.

In considering whom he talks with outside of school, he mentions his family and friends, most of who are in education and can talk with him about shared concerns. He

doesn't tend to talk with random people about education because he doesn't care to debate issues, which seems to be part of his personality. He might speak before the school board, but it would need to be something important. At this time, he has never really thought about doing so. In considering what might be done to communicate with legislators, he says that teachers probably rely on their union representatives to speak for them. He jokes that he could be more socially responsible, but he generally feels his union represents his views and he takes surveys sponsored by the union to get his view across. When asked what politicians could do to understand the practice of education better, he jokes that they should spend some time teaching in the classroom. He thinks that if teachers saw policy makers as taking a stronger personal interest in schools, then teachers would have more trust that the laws created would better meet the needs of practitioners and students. They would also be more likely to re-elect such politicians. He admits that it may be hard to make decisions about who to back because politicians are typically adept in saying what people want to hear, and there is no guarantee that they would fulfill any promises.

Maggie

The final teacher interviewed was Maggie, a first grade bilingual teacher. She has worked in education for 22 years and holds a bachelor's degree in education. She also holds certifications in five different areas including kindergarten, special education, early childhood and gifted and talented education. She has had experience in teaching at all of these levels and had even had experience in high school with special education. She feels these experiences have led her to have a well-rounded view of education. She has also worked with migrant programs to help schools better address the needs of these students.

She has had the opportunity to be a master teacher in a prior district and was able to help fellow teachers with instructional practices. She has been a local and State presenter for prior districts as well. She has worked for large and small districts, so she has seen a great deal a variety in how schools approach diverse student populations. She has been named a bilingual teacher of the year and acted as a liaison directly to the superintendent's office. At this point, she is working towards a master's degree. She was also named a teacher of the year for her city's bilingual teacher association. She has also received numerous writing awards in her prior district.

Based on her wide range of experiences, she has come to hold some strong ideas about the purposes of education. For her, education is about helping all children learn to their greatest potentials. She is uncertain about what levels children may reach and believes that each child should be considered individually based on his or her gifts, but feels that all children can improve. She fears that some educators may not believe children can continue to grow after reaching certain goals, but she see this as a false assumption. For her, it is important that she continue her own education so that she is able to better meet the needs of her students. While some students may not grow into the most successful adults, she wants them to have the ability to make choices for their lives. In her work with the migrant program, she saw that children could have great gaps in their learning, but that schools could help open doors for them beyond migrant work.

Where she sees schools as being most successful is in building the self-esteem of the child by engaging the child in all aspects of education and expanding possibilities and experiences for him. We are providing the child with a set of experiences that will hopefully provide them with the means to be successful adults. In terms of ongoing

problems in education, she sees the inconsistency from campus to campus and district to district regarding programs being offered to students as being particularly troublesome. As an example, bilingual programs might look very different from district to district in terms of both philosophy driving the program and application of education law to the program. She sees some of the same problems in the way that different districts approach reading instruction. Students who tend to be transient suffer the most from these inconsistencies and she believes schools need to do better to insure students are getting the best services they can no matter which school they attend. It is clear that this problem extends beyond the local level when she describes the philosophy and programming for teaching bilingual students held by the State of California, which is very different from the position held by her home State. In California, bilingual programming was cut and research was cited to back this decision, while in her home different research has been used to support the use of bilingual classroom with English support for English Language Learners. For her, the underscores the importance of being aware of programs in other States and listening to teachers with varied experiences so that educational programming can be made more consistent across States and so educators can draw on best practices from across the country. She is not sure if a true national program is possible, but she would like to see an increase in collaboration.

In terms of how she sees the public as understanding education, she thinks everyone basically has a different opinion about education. She sees policy makers creating laws despite having little real experience in schools on a daily basis. She is amazed that such decisions appear to be made with little real background information or experience on which to base such laws. When asked about where legislators are getting their information, she admits to knowing a number of individuals who are heavily

involved in various political campaigns and has spent time herself working with politicians. She seems to believe that most politicians have good intentions, but political interests regarding being elected or re-elected may get in the way of them making good decisions about education. When they are in session, she feels that politicians generally consider the political needs of the community when making decisions, a practice that may not lead to the best education laws. She gives as an example a politician she worked with in a large urban area. A great deal of discussion she heard revolved around how to best package the politician and his message, with little thought being given to what ideas or programs might be good for education. She thinks they are listening to community leaders, but do not necessarily access the average worker and what they are thinking. She sees this as akin to a doctor making medical decisions about a patient based on data fro a file without ever looking at the actual patient or knowing information about the person's life beyond the file. She goes back to the importance of legislators having hands-on experience to help them with creating effective laws.

In moving on to a discussion of the purposes of NCLB, Maggie believes the intent of the law is to provide equal education or opportunities for all children; that it is a right for every child to have an education, and as an educator, it is her job to provide that education to the best of her ability. She thinks too many at-risk and minority children were not being served under previous laws, NCLB has served to make schools more aware of serving all students. When she worked in a prior school, past Education Secretary Rod Paige was the superintendent of the district. Based on what she observed, she saw him as having a real heart for the children and that he was in the schools, seeing what was going on, and listening to educators about concerns. He was highly involved in getting us to a place where every child could learn and not feel like a failure. In her

experience, NCLB has had the most success in the number of programs it has pushed schools to create in order to support a child's learning, many of which are reading or literacy related. Building these programs and helping schools to recognize how important reading is for all students has contributed to improving skill sets students need to possess in order to be successful academically. She describes a program in a large city where the literacy needs of young adult learners are being met through self-paced programs. She says it is thrilling to see students as active, invested participants in their own learning. She relates information about a program in another large city that seeks to meet the needs of school-age mothers. These young women are actively working to stay in school despite the pressures of new motherhood and many are successful in the program. In thinking back about benefits recognized as a result of NCLB, she would say that improvements in literacy programs have made the most differences.

There are, however, some areas that are not working under NCLB. According to what she is hearing from peers, we may be passing children to the next grade level when they might benefit from being held back another year. This may be a hard decision and should be weighed carefully, but for some students, it might be the best response. She also says we need more workers to provide the staffing necessary for all of the programs schools are expected to have. A related problem involves time. For students with a variety of learning needs, there may not be enough time during the school day or after school for the teacher to address deficits. Since there has been a reduction in monies to pay teachers for tutoring, some may not be interested in staying after hours to help students.

NCLB has impacted Maggie's practice the most through pushing her to think about the meaning of literacy and how it goes beyond the teaching of reading. She has come to see teaching as a true interaction with the children where she works to provide the best instructional programming for each student. She has a few students who were not very successful in kindergarten, and she has had to learn how to modify instruction to meet them where they are working. Although the district may tout balanced literacy or guided reading as the answers, she reiterates that the teacher must look at the needs of each student. At her current campus she understands she has enough autonomy to make these kinds of decisions, but in a prior district, the expectation was that you would be on a certain task at a certain time each day. Teachers who were not on the correct objective during administrator walk-throughs would be pulled from class and reprimanded. Every teacher was given an instructional programming chart and all teachers were expected to adhere to this schedule. Maggie was reprimanded for getting up from a group to help a student having trouble with a computer. Overall, she did not see these practices as beneficial for the children or the teachers. As a bilingual teacher, she feels that NCLB has had some impact in helping her meet the needs of her students, but cites inconsistencies from district to district as getting in the way of instruction. As a result, she experiences frustration because her students may have certain needs, but the district interpretation of the law limits her approaches to meeting their needs. She has several students in her class who have been moved back and forth between English and Spanish classes, so their skills are poor in both languages. When asked how the law might be tweaked to work better, she is unsure that inconsistencies can ever be truly eradicated. Even if schools were given the opportunity to come together, they might not reach consensus. She also feels that district leaders may be thinking about what trendy programs they can bring to their schools without really taking into the account the needs

of their student populations. Since she has worked in a variety of districts she is very aware of the gaps that exist between various districts in how they approach student learning. She is also amazed how certain programs seems to recycle through districts with what is new for one group being old hat for another group. She also describes local universities as having a great effect on program schools may try with their students, which will vary from college town to college town.

When Maggie talks with others about education, she generally approaches her team leaders or instructional specialists on her campus. Since they have more of an overview for the campus than the classroom teacher, she will go to them first. Classroom teachers may be presented with a program, but tend to change parts of it to fit their discreet teaching styles, so she will go to the leader to get what she sees to be a truer picture of what is expected. She sees her first grade team leader as a total asset in regard to instructional planning. She does listen to peers, but tends not to bring concerns to them. She also believes in going to district workshops to get more information and to meet teachers from other campuses. Away from school, she will typically talk with fellow workshop attendees or will seek input from bilingual administrators or district presenters. Since she is also highly involved in the community, she talks with a variety of individuals about how education has impacted their lives and seems to feel comfortable talking with anyone. She says she would feel perfectly comfortable taking a concern to the school board or writing a letter to a politician. In looking to bridge the gap between policy and practice, she says that politicians must become more involved in politics and educators must become more involved with reaching out to politicians.

Chapter Six: Discussion

When this study was initially conceived, one of its primary goals was to provide educators with a forum where they could speak about their views on education and how the practice of education is being impacted by No Child Left Behind. Teachers were asked questions about the purposes and meanings of education, where schools are being successful and where they continue to face dilemmas in meeting the needs of children. They were also asked about how they believe these views intersect with the views of the general pubic and policy makers about the purposes and meanings of education. While considering these views, they were then asked to describe how the practice of education has been impacted by NCLB. Finally, teachers provided some insight regarding with whom they usually speak about when they have concerns about education and practice. In this first section of the discussion, educator responses will be examined for commonalities and differences in order to make explicit what these educators are facing at the campus level.

In order to provide the reader with some understanding of the context from which these educators approach this interview, each educator was asked to provide some biographical information about his or her experiences in education. All of the participants have at least seven years of experience in education, with the majority of respondents having twenty or more years of experience, and all currently work in the same Title I urban elementary school. This is important because all of these educators have been working long enough to have some appreciation of trends in education and hopefully some understanding of how education has changed over the past few years under NCLB.

Additionally, each educator has had the opportunity to take leadership roles both on and off the campus. Maggie has been recognized as a campus teacher of the year and a bilingual teacher of the year by her professional organization. Robert holds a Ph.D., has his National Board Certification and has been named a campus teacher of the year. Maxie has helped to implement a special education inclusion program that is a model for the district. Sammie is also a former teacher of the year for the campus and currently holds the title of instructional specialist in math for the campus. Sarah has the most years of experience and now provides campus support as a language arts and gifted and talented specialist. Tiffany provides reading support for the campus and is recognized as an expert in dyslexia. She provides district-wide trainings for teacher s and parents. Carol has a wealth of experience from throughout the district and has been responsible for the development of innovative writing programs used by many campuses. As an assistant principal, Beck holds a master's degree. She has been named a campus teacher of the year and also has received National Board Certification. The principal, Hannah, has been named a campus teacher of the year, and holds numerous awards for developing innovative program while working in the district GT office. Currently, her school is held as a model in the district for its innovations in building learning communities. Because of these experiences, these educators are able to speak on a variety of concerns that fall under the purview of NCLB.

When asked about the purposes of education, every educator gave a similar response, which rested on the idea of educating the whole child. In referencing the whole child, educators emphasized that education should be more than academic preparation to pass a test, that learning should not be so narrowly defined. Educating the whole child also means meeting the physical, emotional and social needs of the children while they

are at school. Every educator interviewed voiced a keen awareness of what their student population is experiencing outside of school and felt it important that the school work to address needs students are bringing to school. All of the educators felt that the development of learning communities in their school has helped to provide needed support for all students. According to Sammie, it doesn't matter if a student is in your class or not; each student belongs to all of the educators on campus and everyone shares a responsibility for the welfare of the children. Beck believes that the parents understand that the school is trying to provide a true sense of community for their students and these parents have a sense of trust that the school is doing the best for their students. While all educators shared these beliefs, some educators offered other ideas about what education could offer. Both Carol and Hannah agree that education should provide students with the ability to think for themselves so that they may act as autonomous adults. For Sarah and Beck, educating children provides them with ways in which they can be successful adults. By success they mean getting good jobs, and acting as responsible citizens in the community. For these educators, education is about more than academic preparation; it means helping children to feel confident and successful as learners. Hannah, Beck, Sammie, Tiffany and Maggie all spoke to the importance of creating a learning environment where children can feel safe in their learning and not intimidated by things they don't yet know or skills they haven't acquired. It is important that the school put forth a message that hard work can make one smarter and that the school would be there to help these students work towards making gains in academic, social and emotional areas.

This view of what education is or can be appears much different than the ideas woven into NCLB. In reviewing the contents of the congressional hearings and the text

of NCLB, one is struck by the apparent narrowness of how the purposes of education are described. Education as academic preparation demands a lion's share of the attention, with reading, math and science competency taking precedence. Some politicians or speakers from special interest groups speak to the importance of education as a means by which students can become productive workers and citizens, but these descriptors seem to emphasize a view of education as a means to feed our economy. Throughout the transcripts, not one individual spoke to the importance of educating the whole child. No provisions or monies are made available to meet student needs that might be of a social or emotional nature; needs that most educators will argue get in the way of learning unless they can be adequately addressed. With respect to this fact, there seems to be some underlying assumption within the law that if students get the necessary academic supports then they should be expected to show improvements on indicators such as standardized tests, despite what may be going on outside of school. However, it must be noted that NCLB does encompass a Title that addresses character education in schools, so it may be argued that at some level, policy makers are considering the needs of children beyond academics. Hearings not addressed in the scope of this paper considered the need for character education in schools, and policy makers heard from secular and non-secular interest groups when considering ideas for NCLB. Although character education has become part of the district initiative for their campus, no educator mentioned it as a support for the needs of children. Since it is largely unfunded, educators may not be getting the resources they need to adequately address character education in their classes and the law may be relatively ineffective in helping children.

When asked to define successes and difficulties experienced by their campus, all educators cited the creation of learning communities as a major success for them.

Through the development of learning communities, educators are able to collaborate with each other about how to meet the needs of students. They can share success and failures in ways that are non-confrontational and that allow them the opportunity to grow as educators. The creation of such communities also provides consistency in instruction both horizontally across a grade level and vertically throughout the campus. This level of consistency insures that all students are getting the same opportunities to learn. Conversely, working together also helps teachers become more aware of the diverse needs of learners including gifted and disabled students and they can draw on colleagues to provide ways of supporting these students. However, while educators felt somewhat successful in meeting student needs, everyone felt that the severity of needs had greatly increased over time, and that schools in general are struggling to meet them. Compounding this problem is that parents may not be able to support schools in helping these students, so schools bear the burden of meeting academic, social and emotional needs that may be beyond the scope of teacher expertise.

Again, the provisions of NCLB and the thought behind them seem narrow in comparison to the concerns of the educators regarding how schools are faring. Under its overarching system of accountability, the law defines school and student success in terms of performance on standardized tests, with an even more specific emphasis on reading, math and science performance. In talking about school success, no teacher talked about student test scores as indicators of success. In fact, several educators including the principal and the special education teacher felt that using test scores as the indicator of success failed to acknowledge gains that students made outside of the scope of testing. It may be possible that tests scores were not mentioned because the school tends to score in the acceptable range for test results, but no educators talked about receiving average test

scores as problematic for their school. They simply talked about working to help students be successful and that gains were gains and should be recognized. In terms of difficulties facing schools, legislators made little if any mention of the academic deficits, behavior problems and disabilities that schools are struggling to address when educating their students. Some funding was provided to meet academic deficits, but no provisions were made to meet diverse learner needs such as those introduced by gifted students and special education students. It is likely lawmakers feel that the needs of special education students are covered under IDEA, which in large part, they are. However, when IDEA intersects with the accountability system under NCLB, competing value systems collide, and teachers run into the problems described by Maxie in terms of deciding on proper placements and testing programs for special education students. Both Carol and Hannah spoke to the difficulties in addressing gifted students under the law. There is no funding for programs for these students, and their needs were not discussed during the NCLB hearings. Testing may not require much from these students who have to put very little work into passing. Hannah and Carol both feel that the lack of challenges available to these students do a disservice to them as learners and eventual contributors to our society.

However, levels of knowing were reversed when educators were asked about No Child Left Behind and what it is intended to accomplish. At the beginning of every interview, each educator began with an apology for not knowing much about NCLB. Robert was especially apologetic, saying he should probably know more about the law. When he thought back over the time since the law's inception, he could remember no meeting when the district provided training about the law. Although he had never considered this, now he found such a lack of training odd. In his experience, any information about the law was probably passed down in the form of discreet training

opportunities designed to educate teachers about an isolated techniques needed by teachers to fulfill obligations of NCLB. Since they felt some embarrassment about not knowing the law, educators approached related questions with sheepish humor. When asked about the purpose of No Child Left Behind, most interviewees immediately laughed and replied that they guessed it was a law that said that schools should be educating all children. Two educators took exception to the title of the law, with Maggie saying she didn't even know how to think about such a title. Carol felt that in some ways this title kept people from making a criticism of the law because no one wants to be accused of leaving children behind. Joking aside, educators seemed to feel that the law was an attempt, albeit a heavy-handed one, designed to protect the learning interests of all children. This understood goal of the law is not so different from what the educators want for their students. Hannah, Beck and Maggie all felt that the law has been beneficial in helping schools to better understand the needs of bilingual and special education students. Such an understanding has led schools to work much harder to increase learning and achievement for these groups. Given the educators rich descriptions of what is being done to educate the different children they encounter, NCLB seems reductionist in its approach to teaching and learning, relying on very specific methods of remediation and narrow systems of accountability to serve as answers for all student needs. In support of this thought, educators also identified areas where they feel the law is not working. As mentioned earlier, most feel the law is too blanket; that while it asks schools to meet needs of all learners, it doesn't go far enough in terms of funding or support. They also criticized the one-size fits all approach to assessment as being detrimental to students because such a system does not recognize gains beyond test scores.

By providing educators with a chance to speak on their views of education, some clarity has been established about what teachers believe about its purposes, successes and failures and how these views compare and contrast with those of lawmakers. That teachers have a more intimate understanding of education than politicians is to be expected; after all their lives are intimately connected to children and learning. However, such comparison and contrast may be valuable in providing some clarity about the divide between policy and practice. A deeper perusal of the information gathered from the congressional hearing for NCLB and educator interviews regarding the purposes of education and the effects of NCLB on practice presents the reader with some idea of the chasm that exists between policy and practice. Issues from personal to societal all have contributed to maintaining the communication gap with little in the way of foreseeable remedy. Arguably, it might be hard to understand why such a gap has flourished – since schools are in charge of educating the very people who go on to make laws, it seems that there might be greater understanding of the needs of schools in evidence during congressional hearings. Given the historic role of public schooling in America to prepare students to be citizens, it also stands to reason that educators might have some better understanding of the place of education in America society and ways in which concerns of the institution might be introduced into a public discourse on education. What follows in the next section should help to illuminate some of the barriers to communication as expressed through the voices of the educators. These views will be compared and contrasted with those of politicians participating in the NCLB hearings in an effort to establish some common ground for building dialogue.

Given the difficulties faced in building dialogue between disparate groups of politicians and teachers, one might ask why such an endeavor need be considered. Don

Polkinghorne (2004), drawing heavily from the works of Pierre Bourdieu provides the following reasons. While he recognizes the need for technique in the day-to-day workings of our jobs, he warns that an over-reliance on technique might result in a reduced performance of the type of job where professional judgment is critical. A field where he feels the use of professional judgment is deeply imbedded is that of teaching. Although teachers may rely on the use of techniques in their practice of educating children, they are just as likely to call on professional judgment when considering what is best for a student. Teachers Sammie, Tiffany, Sarah and Maggie all recounted incidents where they made use of district-directed techniques to teach reading, writing or math concepts, but were very clear that if these techniques did not meet the needs of the child, they would draw on their own experiences to address problems with learning. Such a shift from prescribed methods were observed more often when the teachers sought to help students coming to school with worries about events outside of school. In effect, these teachers are making constant shifts when working with their students, being a counselor, a social worker, etc., which instructional technique does not generally address. What makes this so important is that while much of the force behind NCLB pushes for academic successes for impoverished and minority students, much like those served by these teachers, it makes few provision for meeting the severe needs that students bring to school every day. Given that the teachers possess this window into what learning is like in a high needs school, they are in a unique position to inform policy makers about how NCLB could be adapted to meet more diverse needs. In its current incarnation, the law embodies the expectation that student performance will increase, while indicating that lawmakers seem to have little understanding of what teachers in tough schools face on a daily basis as they push students to meet specified goals.

The educators addressed this concern in their criticism of what they see as a one size fits all law. Respondents routinely reported that while they appreciate the sentiment of the law in making educators aware of the need for all students to be successful in school, they feel the law does not go far enough in defining what success can mean for students with diverse needs. The special education teacher, Maxie, the assistant principal Beck and the principal Hannah all criticized the law for defining success so narrowly in terms of performance on a standardized test. Maxie described the students she works with in the inclusion classroom. These are students with a variety of identified disabilities and levels of functioning, but under the law they will be expected to take the full TAKS test, in part to help the district meet accountability numbers. While a few students may take an alternative test on their current academic level, Maxie is aware that by 2014, all students are expected to take the same level test. Knowing this is coming, she worries how students with more severe disabilities who are now being served in life skills classes will be affected. She also has some concerns that if all students will be expected to take the test, then all students will be served in the same academic setting regardless of what setting might truly be best for them. The assistant principal, Beck had similar criticisms. Based on her experiences in referring students for special education, she has noticed an increase in the district's refusal rate to assess students for special education. Where before, a school could make campus-based decisions about a student's need for assessment, now the school must gather a mountainous amount of data over months and then send all of the data to the area superintendent who makes the decision to test without any personal experience of the student. A student truly in need of support could go almost the entire school year before they were assessed. What makes the situation even more difficult is that the district supervisors may reject a request based on numbers of students identified under a particular disability label. Currently, there is a

district moratorium on referring Hispanic boys for speech evaluation due to over-identification; even if a campus had a legitimate referral, it is unlikely that it would go through. So in order for the district to look like it is making the NCLB dictated improvements on paper, students may go unserved, and everyone on campus must pick up the slack.

The principal, Hannah, had a related concern about one-size fits all. In her view, children may be unjustly punished under the NCLB accountability systems because the tests developed under the law only recognize narrowly measured successes. A student who started out working several grade levels below at the beginning of school might make great gains, but if they did not pass the test, they would be considered failures on campus and district report cards. For her, major problems exist in a system that cannot recognize that students may grow at different paces. She also sees as problematic testing that has been developed for Spanish speaking students. In her experience, she has seen bright, capable students struggle with the tests and questions whether the problem is with the students or with the test. Hannah also worries that those outside of education may see poor or minority children as incapable because of test performances, which obviously do not tell the whole story.

A point that is made by over and over again by the educators interviewed is that if one does not work in education, and particularly at the campus level, one does not have an intimate understanding of what must be done to educate children. Several different respondents likened teaching to working in a microcosm. For Carol, the school world is a reflection of the larger society within which it sits and so encompasses the positives and negatives of society at large. The principal Hannah elaborated on a somewhat different

view of school as microcosm; for her, the school acts as its own contained world with its own rules and concerns. She made the point, in saying that even campus administrators such as principals could be left out of the loop if they did not spend enough time in the classrooms and with their teachers. To extend this reasoning, these educators feel that this lack of intimate experience with their world may also serve to prevent those outside of education from acting in ways that would truly benefit the system. According to these educators, campus workers are privy to certain types of understanding about education that those outside of the field do not possess and therefore teachers will have at their disposal the best ideas for meeting the needs of children. In his book *History and Class Consciousness*, Georg Lukacs (1971) seeks to offer some perspective on the value of practitioner knowledge. In describing how the reification or lack of change in a particular system might be addressed, he posits that those most closely connected to the relationship of capital and labor are able to see how this relationship is impacted in a variety of ways including social, economic and political. Those working outside of this sphere may be unaware of the myriad issues impacting a system such as education, and tend to fall back on what they understand, which is generally economic impact.

In putting this view into the context of policy maker responses given during the NCLB hearings, money was very much a concern. Some decisions about policy directions were made solely so that States could maintain monies already being received. Other decisions made about what would be included in the law were made based on input from community leaders with a financial stake in the outcomes of the law making process. However, they also had enough insight to acknowledge that schools would need an incredible amount of funding to put the accountability systems required by NCLB in place. According to educators however, the money has simply not been enough to fund

the mandate and that some of the monies that were originally earmarked for school programs have been reduced. Given the historical tendency of government entities to see schools as business concerns, this effort to get more for less money seems unsurprising. Lukacs takes his argument one step further in his view that the worker, through his or her position is able to come to understand praxis as a theory, which essentially means they understand the potential for change in an institution. Unfortunately such an understanding of praxis may not initially lead to any change in the worker's condition, which he says comes about by moving thought into a practical theory which is in effect taking action. Although he does not offer a clear picture of what this transition might look like, and agrees that such a move may occur slowly over time or in some sporadic fashion, it is arguable that this idea may in part explain the experiences of the educators, where they see need for change but are unable to take action resulting from such vision.

When asked where educators believe policy makers fell short in creating a workable education policy, every single respondent said that policy makers simply do not have the hands-on experience in schools to know schools really need. They also submitted as fallacious thinking that because the average person attends school, he or she will have some deep understanding of what education is about. In their eyes, the needs of students have changed so greatly over the past years one must work in schools to understand the demands currently faced by educators. Each subject was able to describe in detail the difficulties facing students and teachers today; poverty, violence, language differences and various types of disabilities. However, they had very few workable ideas for how these concerns could be addressed beyond the campus level or how persons making the laws might be contacted to address concerns of practice. This divide appears to speak towards what Lukacs envisioned regarding a practical theory and the difficulties

faced in moving thought and action into that realm. When asked how the communication bridge between policy and practice might be forged, educators were able to offer a single idea – have policy makers come teach in the schools for an extended period of time. Most, even when voicing this idea, laughed it off, and seemed to recognize that it was probably unworkable. Since none of the subjects had ever seen politicians in their schools, they had no real hope that politicians would ever come to them in order to better understand practitioners and education.

While it is clear that educators believe that politicians will probably not come to them, what appears to be more problematic is educator insistence that they will not go to politicians with their concerns. When questioned about barriers to approaching politicians, time was listed as a concern by several educators. Being too busy with teaching concerns to approach lawmakers or not having the time to research hearing times and dates were also cited as reasons action could not be taken. However, there seemed to be little acknowledgement that lawmakers were also under time and work constraints, and are generally responsible for a number of policy initiatives, so for them, time might be just as much of a barrier to communication. However, some educators tried to work around these time constraints by having others speak for them. Both Beck and Robert tried to make an effort through relying on their union representatives to getting concerns across to lawmakers, with one teacher saying he often completed surveys to help inform his union about his views.

In light of educator protestations about politicians not understanding educator needs, attributed in large part to a lack of relevant classroom experience, its seems arguable that the same logic could be applied to union representatives. Given that

material passed on to union members in the school where these teachers are employed typically addresses pay and benefits concerns, one wonders when union representatives address the issues that educators found most compelling – that of educating the whole child and meeting the diverse needs students bring to schools every day. Based on this, educators who trust that unions are adequately representing them about issues of a more philosophical or social nature may not be getting the representation they expect.

A final response that several teachers voiced when asked about reaching out to politicians is that they had never really thought of doing so, mostly because in their words, to be political is not part of who they are. For teachers who gave this response, fear of reprisal did not seem to be a motivating factor; rather they seemed to feel that discussions about political topics were somehow unseemly or would make others in a group uncomfortable. At least two teachers actually claimed that it was part of their personality not to be confrontational which they appear to equate with being politically active. It is possible that the work of Martin Rein (1983) could offer some clarity regarding these patterns of thought. According to Rein, people tend to operate in one of four frameworks that describe how they consider their work environment. In the first frame, workers typically have little awareness of the frame in which they operate. They don't tend to question what they are expected to do and will accept what is asked of them as they work within their given structure. Based on their responses, Sammie, Sarah and Tiffany display signs of working within the first framework. They don't think a lot about outside political forces impacting education and will say that they just do the best they can for their students. They also are the group least likely to engage in "cross-frame" discourse, which means they rarely talk with others outside of their field about education, which was supported in their interview responses. However, it is possible that all of the

teachers with the exception of Maxie may operate within a higher frame where individuals work to ascribe some meaning to what they do and where these individuals may be critical of what is being done to educate children in their particular school setting. Since all respondents see value in their jobs and in helping children, the second or even fourth frame might offer a more appropriate description of functioning. The possibility of these teachers operating at least some of the time within the fourth frame is also consistent with responses indicating they have some recognition of societal forces that impact education; a recognition that reflects some level of awareness of what is going on outside of their school. It is likely that five of the educators including the administrators Hannah, Beck and Carol, and the teachers, Maxie and Maggie, may be working in the fourth frame of awareness because they are able to question their own frame; essentially questioning what schools are doing to educate children within NCLB. This level of questioning shows some understanding of the influences that policy, societal problems and bureaucracy have on the day to day performance of a school. This group is also more likely to reach out to persons working outside of education. While these frames may serve to remind us that people have different ways of acting within a given work setting, they do little to explain how individuals might come to be more active outside of their comfortable work environment. Whether a person's refusal to talk is part of their personality or personal ideology about the nature of their job, it is clear that such perspectives make an expansion of dialogue about education very difficult.

This refusal to approach politicians about education concerns clearly presents a dilemma when one considers how politicians may be informed about the impacts of law on practice. As briefly discussed in the section analyzing the congressional hearings, policy makers are responsible for working on many pieces of legislation that may be

advancing through the ratification process simultaneously. Based on their speeches during the hearings, lawmakers have some understanding of the needs faced by educators, but much of their understanding, especially when debating the need for systems of accountability, is surface level. Schools may get some representation from district superintendents, or from union representatives, but their removed perspectives do not provide the same deep concerns expressed by both the campus administrators and teachers interviewed. It is also clear that special interest groups make the effort required for their concerns to be considered and hopefully included in new laws, but it is just a clear that these concerns may not be in line with what campus level educators need.

Given this lack of concerted effort by educators to approach politicians and the sense that politicians will not find time to approach educators, any hope of bridging a communication gap between policy and practice seems dismal. It becomes questionable what educators really want regarding change in education if they are unable or unwilling to step beyond their campuses to engage outsiders in dialogue. This difficulty is compounded by educator assertions that they tend to limit discussion about education to other educators. Few of the persons interviewed for this study said they routinely talk with others outside of education. When asked why this was the case, all said that persons not working in education do not really understand what is going on. It appears that educators prefer to talk with persons who can empathize with their views and experiences. They want to make connections with people who intimately understand what is faced each day in educating children. Michel Foucault described this phenomenon in The *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) in his discussion of discourse boundaries. Within a given body of expertise or professional knowledge, very specific vocabulary or language will be used by those who move within its boundaries. In the

responses given by the interviewees, most felt that speaking to persons outside of education would not accomplish what they desired; getting help with their own classroom concerns or in the case of administrators helping them to problem-solve about technical issues related to running a school. One respondent even went so far as to say she preferred not to speak to outsiders because doing so created a risk that the conversation could lead to disagreement.

The problem introduced by the existence of discourse boundaries also works the other way. While teachers tend to talk with others that know about education, they also avoid venues where they might talk with people outside of their area of expertise, in part due to fear about knowing *what* or *how* to say. When asked about talking with school board members about campus concerns most respondents said they didn't think about doing it. Others said it would need to be vital concern and that they would have to work hard to get their argument and hard data together so people would listen to them. This may speak to some level of anxiety that teachers feel regarding public perceptions of their professional functioning or judgment. A few teachers were also concerned that if they spoke to the board, no one would listen to what they had to say or act on their comments. It is possible that they feel their concerns are not shared by those outside of the campus and see no reason to engage in a fruitless exercise. On some level these concerns seem valid. School board members are essentially politicians; they are elected to their positions and serve prescribed terms. They also address pressing concerns reaching beyond those of individual campuses, with issues like school finance plans, district report card performances and district safety plans taking precedence over the many smaller issues facing schools each day. Since board members regularly address such lofty issues, teachers may feel intimidated in approaching them with concerns on a smaller scale. It

must be noted that these fears are not based on personal experience; in fact a few subjects had friends who had spoken at several school board meetings without negative repercussions. It is possible some of these same reasons keep teachers from approaching lawmakers who exist in a very different discourse body of politics.

Several questions may be raised at this point. Although teachers may state that they wish for politicians to know more about what is going on in education, a number of barriers seem to have been placed in the way of this happening at any meaningful level. When the response is reduced to "I just don't do that," one wonders about possible underlying causes for such behavior. First, it is possible that teachers are acting in accordance to personality traits that led them to teaching in the first place. Conversation outside of the education boundary could lead to confrontation and political action would most likely lead participants to at least some level of confrontation. Since many of the respondents were clear about their discomfort in approaching people outside of education about education issues, it may be possible that those who teach at elementary levels tend to be non-confrontational types. In support of this idea is the fact that much of teaching at the younger grades is creating order among the students and in the functioning of the classroom. It may be that the possibility for disorder to occur when talking with those outside of education prevents at least some teachers from attempting such conversations. At least three teachers noted time as an issue in approaching others. Maybe they feel that they simply do not possess the time or energy after a long day to engage someone that would need to be educated about education.

A final more difficult question might be, "What vested interest are teachers pursuing by only taking with fellow educators?". In seeking to provide answers one must

look at what benefits teachers currently enjoy. In the interviews, seven out of nine subjects claimed that they have a great amount of autonomy in deciding what is right for students and how they will meet student needs. It may be argued that inviting the public and policy makers into a discussion about education also invites them to have more of a voice in what is going on in schools. It might also be possible that inviting others into the discussion could push the direction of education in such a way that educators would be thrown out of their comfort zones. With the exception of the special education teacher, Maxie, all teachers and instructional specialists felt that they were able to do what they needed to do in spite of the law. These same teachers also claimed that they spend little time thinking about the law or its effects on their jobs. It is likely that Maxie is more aware of the law because she has strong legal obligations under IDEA that must be met if students are served properly. Since she signs off on special education paperwork, she is directly bound by law to support what is written for a student, including placement and testing requirements that intersect with NCLB. The other teachers do not routinely work under this level of legal scrutiny, and this may allow them to be more removed from the demands of the law. Because of these perceived freedoms, teachers may feel that keeping silent buys them some autonomy.

But is this autonomy what it appears to be? Three of the teachers interviewed are currently funded with monies put aside for instructional specialists and coaches. Before the advent of NCLB, these specialized teaching positions did not exist at elementary schools within the district. So for Sammie, Sarah and Tiffany, their very jobs have been made possible by the law, a fact that none acknowledged. When they talk about their responsibilities, they see themselves as working to support struggling students, even though the majority of their charges hail from testing grades and have been identified for

their instructional groups because of failing scores on district benchmarks. No mention is made of teaching to prepare students for TAKS. When asked to be more specific about teaching autonomy constitutes, the teachers all said that they are able to decide which instructional methods would best meet the needs of children. Sammie, Tiffany and Maggie cited district-approved programs and also said that they tend to choose methods that exemplify "best practices". It is beyond the scope of this paper, but it would be interesting to see from where the district is getting its programs. Did they exist before NCLB or were they developed as part some related initiative? In an article from *Phi Delta Kappan*, Alfie Kohn (2002) provides compelling evidence that providing instructional and testing materials for schools has become a big business. A recent CNN.com brief (2006) put revenues for products sold to schools during the 2004-2005 school year at close to $22 billion. In Texas alone, payments to Pearson Educational Measurement went from $36 to $60 in the past five years. Given that these increases have happened after advent of NCLB, it stands to reason that much of these teachers' ideas about practice is influenced by NCLB. Kohn does admit that there are hedges against business-driven models of education, and that collaboration, inclusion and the use of whole language reading programs, all in evidence on this school campus, may serve to promote a love of learning and independent thinking in students. Although several teachers cited using "best practices" to help students, how does one even address the term "best practices"? What does it mean and who determined that these practices are best? If these are empirical-based, research-driven practices, then they are most likely part of NCLB, which seems to have gone unrecognized by the teachers. With this, one must ask whether teachers have the autonomy they claim or are they working within a system that dictates, unseen and unacknowledged, the everyday workings of their jobs?

Despite the undeniable gaps in communication between policy and practice there are some possible avenues for opening dialogue between the two groups. When Jurgen Habermas talks about his Ideal Speech Situation (1987), he says that it works in large part due to the fact that we are beings who naturally use language. Since teachers and politicians both work in arenas were communication is a vital aspect of their jobs, it seems that talking with each other should be in the realm of possible behaviors for them. In a second important point, Habermas makes no assurances about the ease or speed of developing such communication relationships. He admits that steering media such as money or power may make the establishment of dialogue between two parties more difficult; as both Maggie and Maxie noted, politicians have responsibilities to other interests that may hinder them in making laws that address teacher concerns first. it is clear that Habermas believes that with time and effort groups may overcome some of the negative effects of steering media and work toward consensus on matter concerning education. However, speed in reaching some consensus about NCLB may be an unlikely goal when trying to establish dialogue between two disparate parties. When possibilities for dialogue are considered in the context of a hermeneutics as espoused by Gadamer (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1998), one recognizes that any speech encounter serves to add to the understanding of the participants, and that each successive encounter may add to clarity about a given topic. Gadamer also cautions for patience in developing understanding, as rushing toward some final response should not be the primary intention in building a dialogic relationship. At first glance, the lack of outside interaction described by these educators seems hopeless. But when one looks closer, one can see the possibility for expanding the discussion on education outside of the schoolyard. Both the principal and assistant principal regularly have the opportunity to meet with the superintendent of the district. This is key, because he is a former federal employee and

was invited to speak in the original congressional hearings for NCLB. Interaction with him in relation to issues raised by NCLB gives campus staff members an opportunity to understand a political perspective of the law from someone who was engaged in contributing to the discussion for NCLB and allows the superintendent a chance to be better informed about the concerns faced by campuses.

In addition to district-level connections, Hannah, Sarah, Maxie and Maggie all have some personal connections to politicians. Both Maxie and Maggie have worked with politicians on campaigns while Sarah and Maxie worked with Laura Bush when she was an educator. Since they know politicians closely, it stands to reason they could approach these individuals with concerns about education, either formally or informally. They may have few opportunities to do so, but these are clearly opportunities for educators to make overtures towards those outside of education.

Chapter Seven: Implications for Further Research and Practice

One of the initial goals of the project has been to provide educators the opportunity to share their perspectives on education and how education is impacted by No Child Left Behind. A second goal of the project has been to illuminate areas of concern that may come between forging a relationship between those who make laws and those responsible for carrying out the mandates of the law. A final goal for the project is to identify areas where dialogue may be established between those who write education law and those who are engaged in the practice of education. In looking back over the findings contained in the previous chapter, it is evident that the divide between policy and practice spans several areas of concern, with breaks originating from both campus and legislative positions. The descriptions provided by educators regarding teaching and learning on their campus tended to offer rich, detailed pictures of what education is like for a Title I school. In contrast, the views of politicians were not as explicit when their ideas about the purposes of education were explored. Since the views of politicians were analyzed using transcripts of speeches surrounding NCLB, it is clear that the context of these speeches may have impacted the ability of contributing politicians to express personally held views regarding education. At this point, we can make some educated guesses about their intentions behind the law, but it is difficult to tell what may be behind some of the actual decision-making. Based on this concern, it appears that a follow-up study where lawmakers are interviewed about their beliefs about the purposes of education might help create a better understanding of where similarities and differences exist between the beliefs of educators and policy makers.

A second area of disparity between educator and politician responses that could use some clarity is the understanding of the implications for using given techniques in education. When creating NCLB, lawmakers tended to focus on specific education techniques that could quantify student achievement gains. Approved research-based academic programs and State assessments were given great importance when writing the law. Additionally any monies provided for schools would be given only for these types of programs. The only consideration of the effects of these techniques on schools revolved around the idea of getting the most program for the money. No mention was made to reflect the problems teachers have seen with this reliance on technique including the needs of some students being unmet and a lack of recognition for achievement outside of the test. No consideration taken regarding how these techniques would work in an environment where student needs greatly exceed academic difficulties. While teachers such as Sammie, Tiffany, Maggie and Robert all acknowledge that teachers will use different instructional techniques to help students learn, they are clear that teaching must go beyond such a narrow vision to see the needs of the whole child, something the law fails to do. Based on the apparent lack of understanding evidenced by the policy makers who wrote the original law, it might be worthwhile to conduct research with policy makers that delves into their understanding of the impact NCLB is having on day to day practice. Since NCLB is up for reauthorization in 2007, and lawmakers will be looking at the law in terms of its effectiveness, such an examination seems timely.

Although there is much to explore from the politician's perspective of education, and the law and its effects intended and not, questions still remain for the educators. Of immediate interest is why educators do not tend to reach out to others beyond their profession, especially when reaching out involves speech that might be considered

political or activist. This question is important to pursue because it may help illuminate ways in which teachers can reach out to others in ways that are within a certain comfort zone. It is possible that a comparison study done with other people who work in care professions such as nursing or law enforcement might shed some light on this question since these groups tend to share some of the same demands and stresses. The study could then be expanded to comparing the views of teachers with other professionals. Without understanding how other professions approach political awareness and activism, it is unclear if teacher reticence to talk with others is an educator issue or a worker issue.

Related to this line of inquiry would be studies designed to explore what kinds of people enter into teaching, especially as preferences for speaking out are concerned. Such a study could be approached in several ways. The most obvious approach would consist of reviewing teacher personality studies to determine whether teachers as a group have any tendencies towards speaking to people outside of the profession. Additional studies might tap into data about why people enter and remain in teaching. Data about teachers who stay could be compared to data about people who leave teaching within the first three years in order to understand more about the actions of people who choose teaching. A second way of looking at the problem might be to survey principals about what they look for when they hire teachers for their campuses. It may be that schools tend to hire certain types of people that tend not to be outspoken or overtly political.

A third area of study to consider might be on the effectiveness of methods teachers use to get their views across to the public and to policy makers. Two educators, Robert and Beck stated that they rely on their professional organizations or unions to represent their views, and Robert admitted to taking surveys that his organization

presumably used to direct its actions. It could be worthwhile to conduct a survey of the institutions that typically represent educator interests at the federal, State and local levels to see if the concerns being pursued by the groups reflect the concerns of the campus educator. In my experience with local union groups, primary concerns seem to be related to work hours, pay and benefits. These concerns were voiced by Sammie and Tiffany in the educator interviews, but were not primary concerns for most of the subjects. National organizations such as the National Education Association do address concerns about NCLB during annual conferences and devote considerable funds toward promoting their interests in the law. However much of what the NEA focuses on is the claim that NCLB is an unfounded mandate, which reduces a complex issue down to staffing and money. Since no NEA representatives were presented to the committee during the NCLB hearings reviewed in this paper, it would be interesting to understand how such an organization might influence policy making and if the concerns of NEA do in fact reflect those of teachers.

Along with establishing a need for additional studies to add clarity to our understanding of NCLB, its effects on practice and the divide between policy makers and practitioners with regard to the law, comes a need to consider how this study may impact practice. The primary concern illuminated by this study is the very concern voiced by the Harvard Civil Rights Group (2004) which felt that the law had the possibility to be misinterpreted by school districts and campuses in their efforts to implement its mandates. Through such misinterpretation, good intentions of the law might fall by the wayside, while problems with the law might not come to light in a timely manner due to a lack of understanding about what should be done. Every educator interviewed admitted to having little real knowledge about the law, a fact that was borne out in their interview

responses. Both the principal Hannah and the teacher Robert felt that information passed through a number of levels from the federal to the campus level and that along the way became diluted. Robert went so far as to say that information typically was presented to teachers in terms of specific bits of knowledge they need to fulfill NCLB obligations. Robert also added that in his experience, information regarding NCLB compliance issues was typically sent to teachers in the form of emails, a fact with which all educators interviewed concurred. This mode of communication is problematic because as Robert pointed out, teachers tend to view emails as casual modes of communication that may be deleted without any real thought. Hannah says that principals receive the same type of task-oriented passed down information from the district central office and the State education agency that they then take back to their campuses, but again, information tends to be stripped down to guidelines for compliance. Given the very real opportunity for misinterpretation of the law and resulting problems with accountability as have already been encountered by some States, it seems vital that schools take more of an opportunity to educate staff members about the what the law is and where it is going. With accountability standards rising every year and expectations that all children be educated and tested under the same systems of instruction, what educators in this survey identified as problems under the law have the capacity to increase profoundly. This is not to say that providing such training would be easy. Districts are already strapped for money and as both Robert and Hannah noted, teachers may not want to pay attention to training they see as taking time from students and classroom concerns. Given the concern about email communications, districts may need to reconsider what forms are used to transmit information to campus level staff. However, with the reauthorization of NCLB looming in 2007, educators should consider the concerns that have been voiced in these practitioner interviews and consider how participation in gaining a better understanding

of the law can help inform their practice. As described in these interviews, teachers will go to great length to support their students, always pushing for what they see as the best for their students. If the demands students come with have changed as described in the educator interviews, it may be that the job of teaching is evolving as well, to a job that requires its participants to be aware of other influences originating from beyond the campus walls.

Appendices

Appendix A

Proposed Practitioner Interview Questions

General questions to open the interview:

1. What is your personal understanding of the purposes of education? Based on your experiences an educator, where would you say public education is showing indications of success in relation to these purposes? Conversely, what things, if any, would you identify as dilemmas being faced in public education, i.e. areas where these purposes are not being addressed?

2. What level of consistency exists between your views about education and those views you perceive to be held by the general public?

3. What level of consistency exists between your views about education and what you believe to be the views of education held by policy makers? In you view how much do policy makers understand about the practice of education and how legislation affects practice?

4. What is your understanding of No Child Left Behind? How do you see NCLB influencing education in America? In a more personal sense, how does it impact your practice?

5. How do you believe the implementation of NCLB intersects with your understanding of the purposes of education?

6. At your campus level, with whom do you generally feel most comfortable sharing ideas and concerns about education? Why do you choose to share with these individuals? Away from the campus, with whom do you share ideas and concerns about education and why do you share with these individuals?

7. What have you observed when others share their views? How is sharing encouraged at the campus and district levels? How is sharing discouraged at campus and district levels? Beyond the district, what other forums for discussing education issues exist and who is usually included in these forums?

Specific questions to explore interactions between policy and practice

From Duemer, L.S. & Mendez-Morse, S. (2002). Recovering policy implementation: understanding implementation through informal communication. *Educational Policy Archives*, 10(39). Retrieved 2/2/2004 from http://epaa.asu/v10n39.html.

1. Orientation: What is your current understanding of No Child Left Behind? Describe your feelings of support, opposition or neutrality regarding the policy.

2. Degree: To what degree have you worked to support or oppose the policy? Have you attempted to alter implementation procedures? If so, how?

3. Resources: What if any resources have you expended in implementing this policy? Resources may include action, money, influence, information or expertise.

4. Activity: What if any communication actions have you used to support or obstruct policy implementation. Are communications typically formal or informal?

5. Autonomy: How closely are you expected to adhere to policy guidelines? What level of autonomy do you believe of available to you in your current position?

6. Societal values: How do your societal values influence implementation? Societal values relate to ideas or customs for which people have some affective regard.

7. Rationale: Why did you express a certain orientation towards this policy? What are some underlying reasons for your support/opposition/neutrality?

8. Power relationship: What types of communication regarding the policy occur between perceived status levels such as between teacher and administrator, administrator and local education official, etc.?

9. Institutional values: How do your professional ideals or customs influence policy implementation? To what extent are your institutional values in keeping with others in your work environment?

Appendix B

Statement of the Researcher as Participant

Currently, I am in my sixteenth year as a practitioner in the public schools of Texas. I began my career as an English teacher in a high school making the transition from serving a largely rural student population to a more urban one. Many of the students hailed from impoverished backgrounds and were eligible for supports under Title I. During my seven-year tenure, standardized testing was introduced at the high school level. Initially, such testing, known as the TEAMS, was purely diagnostic in nature and served to inform instruction for students showing academic deficits. During my last few years of teaching, the TEAMS program morphed into the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills or TAAS. For teachers and students, this assessment introduced the construct of "test as gatekeeper," where students were required to pass exit level tests to receive diplomas. In some respects, these actions were taken to hold schools accountable for providing students with necessary skills to be productive adults. Reports in the popular press of students graduating without being able to read or do simple math fueled the effort. In my experience, the effect this system of accountability on public education was complex. On one hand, schools now sought to offer tutoring to students in need and began to evaluate courses and teachers for effectiveness in preparing students to pass the exit exams. On the other hand, students who worked hard, attended school regularly and made decent grades were kept from graduating because they could not pass a test, usually the math test. For students failing to graduate with their peers, this was devastating. For me as a teacher, I questioned what I saw as an over-reliance on one measure to determine

the future of an individual. And I questioned whether those responsible for the law understood the effects, both positive and negative, that it had on real people.

As I transitioned from a teacher to a school counselor and began working with elementary school students, I have had more exposure to the effects of policy leading up to and including NCLB. An early proponent of standardized testing, Texas continued to develop its program to address the expanding needs of a diverse education clientele. When I first began work as a counselor, students in the regular classroom took the TAAS, while students educated under special education or bilingual education labels were often exempted from testing. Understandably, many schools focused on groups and subjects being tested, which meant that subjects such as science and social studies received little attention and special needs students ran the risk of not receiving a challenging education. Since NCLB has come into play, these students must be addressed by law, which has been both a boon and a curse for local districts. Special education students in Texas now have the State Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAAII) which is designed to be administered to a student at his or her given performance level as determined by the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee that writes the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). However, a local school can only test so many students off grade level before running afoul of federal regulations regarding testing standards. So the testing process for special education students becomes essentially one of meeting numbers. This oversight is good to an extent because it forces schools to actively educate special education students, but it also works against the very nature of the IEP which seeks to meet the individual needs of a particular student, regardless of how many other students on a given campus might have similar needs. Currently, the Austin Independent School District is going through a crisis related to special education and a poor

performance indicator on its national report card. Again numbers come into play, with schools having to submit extensive portfolios of student work to area superintendents who then approve any special education testing, with an eye towards staying within prescribed demographics for special education populations. The result is that people who have no experience with a given student are making decisions about his or her education. The process for targeting students with learning, emotional or social needs becomes infinitely more drawn out, and the lack of trust by central administration for the practitioner's ability to use student data in making professional decisions is staggering. Understandably, parents who want quick action are frustrated by this process, and while the principal wishes she could have parents call Central Office to complain, fear of reprisal prevents any such action.

Service for bilingual students offers the same mix of bitter and sweet. Where before these students often languished in classes that worked years behind their peers, they now are expected to test with them, and the quality and rigor of instruction has improved for them. As with special education, most of the difficulty lies in the level of oversight and documentation required to manage the education of bilingual students. Even a student very new to the country may be asked to test with the use of a dual-language dictionary and a translator who may view the top-secret test the morning of administration and must quickly forget everything upon completion of the exam. Teachers must also receive training in how to assess students in reading, writing and listening in English and must take an examination to demonstrate rater reliability. This last part is brand new from TEA, and even they don't fully understand at this time how these assessments will be carried out, but schools will be expected to be ready by March.

This puts enormous pressure on teachers and administrators alike and is an indicator of how quickly States are having to move to meet federal guidelines.

At this point, for me NCLB is a mixed bag. It offers help for students traditionally given short shrift from public education and holds school responsible for meeting individual student needs. But with the good comes high expectations often without the necessary funding or staffing to meet them. And at a human level, there seems to be an erosion of trust for the practitioner as a professional, given the increasing amounts of oversight coming from local, State and federal levels.

Appendix C

Consent Form

IRB APPROVED ON: **EXPIRES ON:**
IRB Protocol # 2006-08-0073

Consent Form

Title: The No Child Left Behind Act: The Divide Between Policy and Practice

CONDUCTED BY: TERI WOOD, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, PHONE: 302-3885, EMAIL: T.WOOD@MAIL.UTEXAS.EDU

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You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about this study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so, simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of educator perceptions of the impact of the No Child Left Behind on practice and how these perceptions compare and contrast with those of persons responsible for the creation of the policy.

If you agree to be in this study I will ask you to do the following things:

- **Participate in a short, structured interview regarding your perceptions of No Child Left Behind and its influence on education practice.**

- **Allow me to tape the interviews for later transcription and analysis.**

If you agree to participate in this study, you may choose the place, day and time which will be most convenient for your interview. However, no interviews will be conducted on Austin Independent School District premises. There will be a notification and or reminder of the upcoming interview at least 24 hours before the interview will occur. I will contact you immediately before the scheduled time to insure it is still acceptable.

The interview should last about one hour. If during later analysis, I need clarification on a response, I may ask for an additional 15 minutes of your time.

WOODTL

IRB APPROVED ON: **EXPIRES ON:**

The current study represents minimal risk.

- **The names of the subjects, school, district and city will be changed to promote privacy of responses. However, depending on the specificity of responses, it is possible that a subject could be recognized by peers reading the dissertation.**
- **Interview questions may provoke negative feelings about education practice.**
- **If this interview exposes a risk that is currently unforeseen, please ask questions of the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.**

Benefits of the study involve participating in an interview that will allow educators an opportunity to reflect on views of education and practice. Educators may also gain a better understanding of No Child Left Behind and how they may participate in future dialogue surrounding the Act.

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

In order to maintain confidentiality, you will be asked to provide the Principal Investigator with a name you wish to be referred to in the text of the dissertation. All collected data, taped and written will refer to you with this name.
Since this study will use audio recording during the interviews,

- **tapes will be coded with your provided name, with no personal identifying information visible on them;**
- **tapes will be kept in a secure place (locked file cabinet in the primary investigator's home office);**
- **tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the primary investigator;**
- **tapes will be erased after they are transcribed or coded.**

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study. Please note that if the researcher observes child or elder abuse during the course of the interview, confidentiality will be broken and the researcher will be required by state

law to report such abuses to Child Protective Services or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

WOODTL

IRB APPROVED ON: **EXPIRES ON:**

If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information or wish to withdraw your participation, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names and phone numbers are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns or questions about the research, please contact Lisa Leiden, Ph.D., Chair of The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

_____Date:_____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____ Date:_____

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Vita

Teri Wood was born in Kilgore, Texas. She received a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Design from Texas A & M University in 1984. Upon graduation from college, she moved to Austin and worked as an assistant for the Texas State Troopers Association. During this time, she pursued a teaching certification in English from then University of Southwest Texas State and completed her certification in 1989. She was then hired to teach senior English at Del Valle High School in Del Valle, Texas. Over the next seven years, she taught senior level regular and Advanced Placement English, creative writing, visual media and Peer Assistance and Leadership. During the 1995-96 school year, she was recognized as the campus and secondary Teacher of the Year for the district. In 1996, Ms. Wood entered the University of Texas at Austin to pursue a Master's degree in Education within the Department of Educational Psychology. While in school, she was awarded the Royal J. Embree Scholarship in recognition of her academic accomplishments. After graduation, Ms. Wood took a position with the Austin Independent School district in Austin, Texas, and has worked as an elementary counselor for the past eight years. While working as a counselor, she was recognized by the University of Texas Volunteer Board as an outstanding community partner. She has also worked with the Department of Educational Psychology as a site coordinator for student interns in the School Psychology Program for the past three years.

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